

## Submitting Ourselves To God

When I read through this morning's passage from James, my thoughts go back to Jesus' teaching in **Luke 9:23-24**,

*"If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and talk up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it."*

Today we're going to talk about what it means to submit to God. Jesus made it very clear to His disciples that there would be a price to following Him. That price would involve self-denial and obedience on a daily basis. Today we do just the opposite. We try to make following Jesus so attractive and so much fun that people freak out or run to another church if they are ever confronted on their attitudes or lifestyles.

I make the observation because what we do today stands in sharp contrast to the clear message of New Testament, and James, in particular. James doesn't pull any punches, his purpose is to focus on four areas where we need to submit our behaviour to God.

Submission is an interesting word. I Googled the word 'submission' and got a good definition, *"the Biblical concept of submission is to place oneself under the authority of another. When we submit to God, we give our lives to His authority and control."* I would add one thing to this definition, **to submit to God's authority is impossible unless we know the teachings of Jesus and the Apostles and embrace them to shape our attitudes and actions.**

In **John 1:1** we read that God and His Word are one and the same. *"In the beginning was the Word, and the word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning."* (He refers to Jesus, the only Son of God). In **John 1:14** we continue, *"The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth."*

My point is simply: we cannot submit to God without submitting to His Word found in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. When we examine books of the Bible, like James, we find direction in how God wants us to live. This is why Paul wrote to Timothy, (**2 Timothy 3:16-17**),

*"All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."*

What are four things we must pursue if we want to be in submission to God?

1. **Submit our desires to God.** Re-read **James 4:1-3**. One of my favourite songs is a country-western song called 'Homegrown' by the Zac Brown Band. The song talks about the *'weight that we carry from the things we think we want, I've got everything I need and nothin' that I don't.'* James says that fights and quarrels are

caused when we want something and don't get it. Perhaps, says James, we need to ask God if He really wants us to have what we're asking for? We often don't get what we want from God because we're asking with impure motives, so we can simply satisfy our pleasures. This, I believe, is one of the major drivers in our culture: HEDONISM.

2. **Submit our friendships to God.** Re-read **James 4:4-6**. James says that friendship with the world is hatred toward God. Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God. James then speaks of the spirit who lives within us envies intensively. I believe this goes right back to the second of the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:4-5), "*You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in the heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below...for I the Lord am a jealous God,*"

Today, many Christians are trying to indulge their worldly passions and at the same time walk with God. It's very uncomfortable to have one foot in the Kingdom and the other in the world; kind of like trying to straddle a barbed wire fence! There are many ways we do this: our social group, the clubs we belong to, the entertainment we watch, the music we listen to, the hobbies we pursue, the list goes on...Idols come in many forms, and they can easily take our focus off of God.

3. **Submit ourselves to the Lord by putting on His armour.** Re-read **James 4:7-10** This is one of the most important Scriptures I turn to whenever I'm facing temptation. There are four steps to follow:
  - Submit your focus to God, eliminate distractions and focus on Him. Put on the armour of the Spirit found in **Ephesians 6:13-18**.
  - Resist the devil and he will flee from you. We resist him with three offensive weapons: the Word of God, the Name of Jesus, and the Blood of Jesus
  - Wash your hands you sinners and purify your hearts. This means to position ourselves for repentance (a change of mind)
  - Humble yourself before the Lord by confessing your sins and asking forgiveness.
4. **Submit to God by forgiving those who've sinned against us.** Re-read **James 4:11-12**. Whenever we slander another person, the root cause is hurt and unforgiveness. *Hurt turned outward results in anger. Hurt turned inward results in depression.* When we forgive, we relinquish to God all authority to be the judge. When we position ourselves in His place, by judging others, we place a huge obstacle in front of us in being able to hear God's voice or receive His grace

When Jesus spoke of taking up our cross daily and following Him, He was pointing toward submitting ourselves to God. Submission is an attitude that results in action. Let's remember and put into practice four ways we submit to God:

- Submit our desires
- Submit our friendships
- Submit ourselves to God by putting on His armour
- Submit by forgiving those who've sinned against us