

“PRESCRIPTION FOR SUBMISSION”

HOLINESS

THE REV. TED WOOD

I Peter 2:13-16

January 30, 2015

Sig: This is the Reverend Ted Wood.

Ted: “Reverend” is incorrect. “The Reverend” is correct. (*Laughter.*)

Sig: Yeah, that’s what I thought. You have the proper article—

Ted: Automatically, people say, “Hey, Reverend!” What did you say?

Participant: One states that you have an office. The other one states a personal statement.

Ted: Yes. I may not be very reverend, but I am the Reverend.

The LORD be with you.

Men: And also with you.

Ted: Let us pray. “I bless the LORD who gives me counsel. In the night also my heart instructs me. I have set the LORD always before me, because He is at my right hand, and I shall not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad, and my whole being rejoices. My flesh also dwells secure. For You will not abandon my soul to the pit, or let Your Holy One see corruption. You have made known to me the path of life. In Your presence there is fullness of joy, and at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.” We ask You, Lord, as we study Your word, that it may be for us pleasures forevermore. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

Men: Amen.

Ted: Well, I thought of Sig’s passing out the wrist band, because Sig stated that this is a wrist band that talks about God’s sovereignty, and you can wear it if you choose.

Sig: It’s dangerous—

Ted: I mean, is there a contradiction there? But that’s okay. Only I picked it up, and maybe I have no idea what I’m talking about.

Last week

Bruce asked me to speak and to continue the Bible study. He said, “I’d like you to speak, on submission.”

And I said, “No, I won’t.” (*Laughter.*)

It’s just because I told him that I won’t. I’m such a miserable failure at submitting. And having to study this provokes my soul, because I don’t do a very good job at all in this whole area. But those subjects, those things of Scripture, the things of the word of God that I have the greatest difficulty with I try to dive into with both feet. I have great problems, like Luther did, with the epistle of James, so I dove into it with both feet, and was more agitated when I finished than when I began, so it doesn’t always resolve itself immediately.

But nonetheless, let’s look at this whole area of submission. You can see, at the very top there, under “The Prescription for Submission: “Be Subject for the Lord’s Sake, Living as Servants of God.” So this is the theme Bruce has pointed out in 1 Peter, the second and third chapters, talking about submission.

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This is kind of a review, and maybe you folks can help me to see if I’ve forgotten anything.

Different Kinds of submission. That was 1a. To each other in the body. We are to submit ourselves to one another. You certainly see this in Ephesians the fifth chapter, submitting to one another out of reverence to Christ. That leads into the next verses about “wives, be subject to your husbands.” Usually, us men start there. We don’t start with the verse before it, which is to “be subject to one another.” So we’re to be in submission to one another in the body. That’s the nature of the body of Christ. And then it goes on more specifically. “Wives, be subject to your husbands.” I think that one of the areas that is most glaring in our modern evangelical church is that we don’t submit to one another. We start off and have our own idea, and go on down the road.

I am working, consulting now, with the Erie city Mission. It’s a great organization. They do a lot for homeless and hungry, and folks that are addicted, or have mental illness that are out on the street. And I got to talking with one fellow. There is a young fellow in the program, and he came to me. He comes to me regularly, and he is a very bright fellow. Unfortunately, he has gotten wrapped up in drugs and addictions. And in our discussion, he has all these Bible questions, and he’ll know that I’ll talk to him about these things.

So, as we discussed, he said, “Well, what I really want to do is that I want to go through the program here,” (which takes nine to twelve months.) “I want to go through the program. I’ve really gotten in touch with God, and I’m really studying the Bible. I’m going to get in touch, and when I get out of the program, I’m going to start my own church.”

And I said, “Okay. Who’s authority are you under?”

He says, “I’m under God’s.”

I said, “That’s not good enough.” Because we have so much of a mindset these days, I’m just going to go off and do my own thing, without any accountability to one another. We’re not submitting to one another. People, teachers, pastors come up with doctrines and teachings that don’t have any similarity to that which the church has taught from its very beginning. But they feel justified in doing that.

That seemed to throw him. He had no context of being in submission to somebody over him with greater authority, which is the malaise of our society. I think that, in time, we’ll look back on this time, and see that this was a great sickness that infected our church.

So, anyway, submission to one another in the body, submission to civil authorities. “Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God.” A very difficult verse, when you think about the Hitlers and the Stalins of this world, and that could actually still apply. There is a lot of sorting it out.

“To masters.” And I think Bruce was about to get into this in the last class, where he equated masters and servants as being employers and employees. I’m not too sure if that connection works, because our whole understanding of being an employee to a boss is different from a master to a slave, because we assume that we, as employees, have certain

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rights, and servants did not. But, nonetheless, “Servants, be subject to your masters with all respect, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the unjust.” Bruce had some great stories last week about how he handled that, where he had difficult bosses.

And then finally, to church leaders. “Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls.” A great passage in Hebrews, in submitting.

“Well, I didn’t like how that preacher preached. I’m leaving and going someplace else.” Very interesting. Yes?

Participant: I guess for me, Bruce, uh—

Ted: Bruce?

Participant: I’m sorry. (*Laughter.*)

Ted: That’s all right. I love it, I love it. (*Laughter.*)

Participant: Good morning, Randy.

Randy: good morning. (*Laughter.*)

Ted: Okay, that’s okay. Go ahead.

Randy: A big block for me to submission is, of course, pride and ego.

Ted: Sure. And what I want to try to do today is to talk about how you actually deal with that. I mean, we all can say that a big obstacle to submitting to God, to each other, to authority within the church, we can all say that’s a problem. I want to figure out how to get through that. That’s what I’m struggling with. I’m just giving a quick review of what I think are the different submissions that Bruce talked about. Maybe I missed something. Do you guys think I’ve missed anything from Bruce’s teaching? Yes, Jay?

Jay: I was just going to say, when you said, “Did you miss out, brother?”, but I just had a question for you, in regard to Philippians. It’s in Philippians 2, and it says, referring to Jesus,—

Ted: Yes.

Jay: “But made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, becoming in the likeness, and being found in appearance as a man. For He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”

Ted: Right.

Jay: So my question to you is in regard to submission and humility. Would you say that this is pretty much kind of—

Ted: Yes, absolutely! And I’m going to get into that passage in Philippians, which is a great one.

But here is the issue. It says that, that this is what Jesus did. And in another verse it says that He set an example for us in terms of this submission, even death on the cross. The problem is that we can say that message. Do all of you brothers believe that?

You go, “Yes, brother, I believe it! I believe it!”

I said, “Are you doing it?” (*Laughter.*)

“Well, I’m trying.”

“well, how well is the trying going?”

So I’m trying to get to that point. That’s where I’m always trying to get. I don’t have much patience for preachers that get up, and just lay down a lot of principles, without

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trying to figure out how the rubber actually hits the road. That’s what I want to find out. Yes?

Participant: The only thing I might want to add to this, but it’s outside of the scope of Peter, is in Ephesians, where it talks about children submitting to their—

Ted: Oh, that’s right. That’s exactly right. That didn’t seem to work too well in my household, but that’s okay. (*Laughter.*)

I just want to say that my understanding of submission to church leadership is such that I feel that I don’t really have the prerogative to believe and accept as doctrine for me things that haven’t been proven by the leadership and by the church for two thousand years. I don’t have that prerogative. And so, therefore, when we talk about, for us Anglicans, the Thirty-nine Articles, I say, “I believe all of them, even the ones I don’t believe.” (*Laughter.*) I mean, that’s where I have to submit to their greater wisdom over the years.

So nonetheless, so that’s the first thing, the review. The second thing is getting down to where the rubber meets the road. You know that song “Trust and Obey?” (*Singing.*)

Trust and obey,
For there’s no other way
To be happy in Jesus,
But to trust and obey.

We sing that song. The Victorians produced a lot of very emotional hymnody, and they have tunes that are easy to sing. And they evoke great emotion. Even the music itself is emotional, but the content may be bad. You know, I have a huge problem with that hymn, (*Singing.*) I surrender all. Okay, well listen. To the guy who is writing that, I’m saying, “Let me ask you a question. Are you surrendering all?”

“Well, I’m trying it.”

Well, why don’t you put that in the hymn? (*Laughter.*) (*Singing.*) I’m trying to surrender all. (*Laughter.*)

Participant: Here’s a new one. (*Singing.*) I surrender ten per cent. (*Laughter.*)

Ted: Yeah, right. But you know, the tune is catchy, isn’t it? And, you know, we have that in a lot of contemporary Christian music. The tune is very catchy, and, before you know it, we’re standing up and raising hands and excited. “Oh, I feel the Lord is there. Oh, the Lord was present.”

“Well, how do you know He was present?”

I was told that once by a worship leader. “Oh, the Lord was very present in this service.”

And I said, “How do you know?”

And there was a blank look. For this person, this worship leader,--experienced, a very professional worship leader,--he didn’t have an answer, because for him it was the feeling of the service.

And I said, “The way that we’re going to know that the Lord was present in this service is that, in about three or four months from now, if everybody’s life has been changed.” I mean, if people’s lives have been changed, then the Lord was in the service.

Participant: Wasn’t He there regardless?

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Ted: Well, of course He was. Thank you, Sig. And that’s something I get. When the service starts up, “Lord, we’re inviting you into this service.” (*Laughter*). Whoa! God Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth! We’re inviting Him into the service? What does that mean? It’s just this bad theology! Yes?

Participant: There were lots of feelings when the Israelites had that golden calf. (*Laughter.*)

Ted: Yes, there were a lot of good feelings. Right! But anyway, but nonetheless, why do I fail to submit?

You know, I was listening. Who were those two sports commentators ? They’re funny, a little raw at times. They’re on 93.7. What is that? Do you know what I’m talking about?

Participant: Mike and Mike?

Ted: Is that Mike and Mike, where they go back and forth?

Participant: No, it’s Tunch Ilkin and Craig Wolfley.

Ted: No, no, no, no. (*Laughter.*) well, you know, if you ever listen, it’s great. I love to listen to it. It’s a great commentary. And one of the guys says, “I’m really having a difficult time this winter. I’ve been in a funk for over a month.” He says, “I’m not paid up on my mortgage. My mortgage has been unpaid. I just don’t feel like paying my mortgage. I don’t feel like going into work.”

And the other fellow said, “Well, why is that so?”

He says, “Well, I just don’t feel like it.”

And I kept on thinking, “No, that’s not the issue.” The issue is this. I kept saying to the radio, “The issue is you don’t want to.”

And so he kept it up. He was being frustrated. Finally, he said, “Well, you know what? I just don’t want to.” (*Laughter.*)

The radio gave the correct answer. He doesn’t want to! So the question is that you don’t submit unless you want to submit. And if you want to submit, you will submit. So the question is, how do you get to that point of submitting? How does God work in your life so that you and I actually begin submitting on a regular basis with some consistency?

Participant: Pain.

Ted: What?

Participant: I said some pain.

Ted: Well, thank you, brother. I’m getting into that. Thank you, straight man. (*Laughter.*)

In a way, it’s a Romans 7 thing. And we get that. “I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. So then, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me.” Boy, that’s a statement! It requires some unpacking, but I’m not going to. “For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out.”

So how do we get beyond that? Number three, I don’t have the ability to carry it out. But the great news is that God does. And after all this problem, laying out this great conflict that Paul talks about in Romans 7, after going through all of that, how does he

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end that section? I mean, he ends it by saying, “But thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!”

So obviously, I don’t have the ability. In my flesh I don’t have the ability, but God has the ability. Therefore, thanks be to God, because He is the one who can cause this submission to take place. “God is able to make all grace abound, so that, having all sufficiency in all things at all times, we may abound in every good work.”

So if submission is a good work, then how do we abound in that? Well, it tells us in that verse. It says “because grace abounds.” So, as grace abounds, which is God’s great work, unmerited favor, His great power in our lives, this grace that comes forward, this amazing grace, this is the thing. As it abounds, it causes good works to abound.

So people talk about God’s part and my part. It’s not so much that we’re doing things at the same time. It’s that one flows from the other. So, as God’s grace abounds, therefore my good works abound. And one of the greatest good works is to submit to God.

Well then, how does God cause us to submit? I mean, if the initiative comes from God, if God is the One who is forcing, who is driving the process, then in my flesh there is no good thing. There is no good work in my flesh.

At the City Mission in Erie, there is one of the staff members who is a pastor in his church, and we get into it, because I say, “You know, in your flesh, even after you’ve been born again, in your flesh you cannot do a good thing.”

He says, “No, that’s not true.” He says, “In my flesh I can do many good things.”

So we go back and forth on this. And I said, “Well then, what you’re saying, basically, is that you don’t need God to do the good thing, because in your flesh, you can do it.”

And he says, “No, that’s not right.”

“But that’s what you just said.

So we go back and forth. And, probably fortunately, he has gone into another job. (*Laughter.*) I’m tempted to call him up and harass him. I got his number the other day, just to be bad.

But, in terms of this submission, it all begins with the absolute necessity of regeneration and the new birth. “You must be born again.” I mean, if there is any message that we give to people, that has got to be it.

George Whitfield, the great eighteenth century evangelist in England and in the States, the colonies, that was his message all the time—the new birth. Often in his journal, he writes, “I spoke to this group of clergy about the new birth.” And that’s what we’re saying.

The original you, the way you were born into this world, is totally insufficient to do anything that God commands. So you must be born again.

It’s interesting. I’ve gotten into a discussion recently with a person who is struggling with same sex attraction. And I know I’ve been told that they want to talk to me about that, and what I and the church thinks about it. But I’ve tried to head that off even before the question is raised, because, you know, if you start off with that question, you say, “Well, God is against it.” Well, unless that person is born again, he doesn’t get it. They

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don't get any of the issues. They are judging my response based on their flesh, and what their human understanding is.

So I said to this person, I said, “You know, the most important thing,” before they've even raised the question, and they haven't raised the question, I said, “this one thing you need to know about the teachings of Jesus and the Christian faith is that your first birth is totally inadequate, and you must be born again. You must have the new birth.”

And you know, after that, I said to this person, “Issues of race, gender, sexual identity, wealth, status, are all hugely inferior to this greatest question. Have you been born again?”

So once you've settled that, if the person cares to pursue it, and he asks me the question, “What do you think about same sex attraction?”, I'm going to say, “Let's settle that issue first, because you can't even begin to handle the rest of it.” Yes, and that is what our culture is wrapped up in. What is your sexual identity? What is your racial identity? What's your status? Do you earn too much money, or too little money? And then we go into all those questions. While they may be legitimate questions, they are not the essential questions, nor do they have any profundity to them outside of the new birth. So you must be born again.

I mean, you guys know that. But it's so very important to start there with the whole discussion. Yes?

Participant: What if a person responds to you in that situation, and says, “I am born again?”

Ted: Yes. Well, then, that takes further investigation. This person knows nothing about the Christian faith.

Participant: The one who wants to talk to you about sex?

Ted: Right. Yes. And it's funny, because the people who brought her to our church are fearful of what I'm going to say. I can see that they're sitting over in the corner, biting their fingernails. Is Ted going to mess up the deal? Is he going to put this person off so she'll never come back again? They'll never come back then. So that's why I've had to think very hard about what is the issue that I want to get to this person?

But same sex attraction, throw that out. That's no different than any issue. Everybody, even if they're the best person in the world, still needs to be born again. They need to be regenerated by the Spirit.

And I told this person. I said, “You know, this is the thing that makes Christianity different from any other religion or philosophy in the world. Every other religion or philosophy says that it's a matter of getting the correct understanding of the universe, and then you go on from there. We say, forget the correct understanding of the universe. You need to be born again first. That's right. And then you'll get the correct understanding of the universe.” Yes?

Participant: I just wanted to say, when you were speaking, I was just thinking, even just with the two races, that we're either dead in Adam or alive in Christ.

Ted: Yup.

Participant: And that's really the most important question that would put everything else underneath that.

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Ted: Right. And I told this person, in line with that, I said to them, as it says here, “Whoever has the Son has life, and whoever does not have the Son does not have life.” And I mean, I tell you, if you want to be offended at that, go ahead and be offended, because that is the offensive question, isn’t it? That’s the thing that turns everybody off. As Bruce was saying, people would say, “Come and give the sermon, or give the prayer at our prayer breakfast. You can talk about God, but don’t talk about Jesus.” Right? I mean, he’s talked about those situations. “He who has the Son has life; He who does not have the Son does not have life.” That is the stumbling block, right at that point. If you can get through that, then everything else flows right from there. That’s our presupposition. We start with that presupposition. Yes?

Participant: I don’t want to gloss over that. You said that it starts with “you must be born again.”

Ted: Yes.

Participant: That stops all the arguments. If you get sucked down into worldly arguments, and justifying it, and what proof do you have of the bible, when we go down these paths, it’s just all smoke. Am I declaring the obvious? Hopefully, I’m not the only one here, but that is the great aha. It starts right there.

Ted: It does. Right.

Participant: But I find, in that same situation, Ted, that I’m speaking about, is that I know a lot of people, and a couple of them are gay, who say, “I am born again.”

Ted: Okay. Well, then you need to work with them. That would be true of anybody. This is what it would be like. Take yourself back to the South in the 1920s. “I’m born again, but those colored folks, you know, I don’t want them in our church.” I mean, you’ve got to start there. “I’m born again. I know Jesus. I love Jesus.”

Participant: See, I agree with you. But I think the problem is submission.

Ted: Right.

Participant: We say anything, because we believe it and want it to be true, but have we really submitted? I mean, I can say that I’m alive in Christ, but I sin.

Ted: Right.

Participant: I’ve got some good sins.

Ted: Right.

Participant: Not that I want to talk about them this morning. (*Laughter.*)

Ted: and when you come to your right mind, as the prodigal son did, (*Laughter.*) You will see that they’re not good sins. They’ll kill you.

Participant: I mean, they’re productive. They’re always there.

Ted: Yes.

Participant: So how do we sin, and yet say we’re born again? I’m born again, but I haven’t come to that point where I can give up my fleshly desires.

Ted: Okay, well, you’re dealing with the existential, rubber hits the road issue of how one submits. I’m starting off by saying that you must be born again. I mean, that’s where we start. I can give you lots of things. Well, this is the way to stop doing this.

I remember that we had a person I did some counseling with, a Christian psychologist. And those people used to obsess and obsess in their thinking. And so what we did was

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that we had them put a rubber band around their wrists, and every time they started to have obsessive thoughts, they'd bang themselves. They began to associate these things. I mean, I can give you tidbits, but that's not going to help you unless you've been born again. Yes?

Participant: Well, if you think of the man who came to Jesus in Mark, 9, Jesus asked him if he believed for the healing of his daughter, and he said, “I believe; help my unbelief.” So I think somebody can say, “I believe,” if he has the struggle with the attraction that is there, as long as they are identifying that as “I believe; help my unbelief,” any sin, any desire that we have that is wrong is a manifestation of unbelief.

Ted: Yes.

Participant: So, as long as you're identifying that, and you confess that that's part of your unbelief, well then, you're in the same boat as the rest of us.

Ted: Yes. You would have to say that. But then, if you continue to say that this is an okay behavior, or view, then I would have to say that you're not in agreement with what the church's understanding of Scripture has been for two thousand years. We're out here. You're right, and the church is all wrong.

I mean, that's what I said to a Jehovah's Witness who once came to my door. Don't try to get into an argument about Scripture. They've got an answer for every single Scripture that you throw out. I may have shared this story, and I apologize. But I finally said to them, “I've got to give you a warning. What you're saying is contrary to the way that the church has understood the Scripture for two thousand years. You're staking your eternal destiny on what somebody said in 1870.” So, a hundred and thirty years versus two thousand years of understanding. She didn't have any answer for that. They had not scripted her for that.

Participant: Amen.

Ted: Don?

Don: Yes, Ted. I think you're hitting it on the head. The person, no matter what sin it is, who struggles with it, hates it, may continue to commit it, but hates it, knows that it's wrong, and by the power of the Holy Spirit wants to repent, then there's hope. But if a person claims to be born again, but says, “I don't see anything wrong with this, and I'm going to do it, because I feel that way,” or whatever, then that gives me pause to wonder.

Ted: But Don, here's the thing. You said, “If they really hate it.” The problem is, Don, you sin because you actually love the sin more than you hate the sin. If you truly hated the sin, you wouldn't be doing it.

Participant: I disagree with that.

Ted: Okay.

Participant: You do it, and then afterwards,—

Ted: Okay, consequences. Yes, I mean there are always—

Participant: No, I'm not saying consequences.

Ted: Right.

Participant: Sometimes there are zero consequences right now.

Ted: There are consequences in your conscience, always.

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Participant: By acknowledging the sin, and knowing it's sin, versus saying that it's not a sin,--

Ted: that is the problem, when we begin to say that the truth is a lie and a lie is the truth. Then there is no hope, at that point. Yes, right. Go ahead.

Participant: Well, the truth that you have to submit to is right here.

Ted: Right.

Participant: And that's the sort of thing you have to get into your head. This is the truth. You either believe it or you don't. If you don't believe it, very well. But this is the truth that we have to submit to. God says that homosexuality is not right.

Ted: Yes.

Participant: You know, we need to stand on this, because this is the truth we have.

Ted: Right.

Participant: The Bible is the only truth we have.

Ted: We don't disagree with that statement. We don't disagree with that statement at all. It's actually doing it.

That's the problem. I mean, if there is anybody sitting here who says that the Scripture is not the truth, well then, that's a whole other discussion. But if you say that the Scripture is the truth, what we're talking about is how you actually live into that. I mean, I don't have patience with preachers who say, "this is the truth!" Yet they themselves, their lives are in rebellion against this. Why don't they deal with that rebellion? I'm not condemning them. I have the same rebellion. Do you understand what I'm saying? That's the real problem. It's not that this is the truth. The problem is that in my life, I act as if it's not the truth. Would that be true? I mean, every one of us, unless you feel that you have a highly exalted opinion of your own sanctification, *(Laughter.)*

Participant: Which is a sin in and of itself.

Ted: Yes, bill, and then I've got to keep going. Bill, go.

Bill: Okay. I just want to back up a second, because Bruce has taught us that there are two types of gospels. There's a Biblical gospel, and there's a gospel we hear today that is man-centered.

Ted: Yes.

Bill: Not Christ-centered. And people believe that they're born again because they went forward.

Ted: Right.

Bill: They raised their hands. They repeated a prayer. We can't see inside a person.

Ted: Right.

Bill: But when they're talking like this, and there is very little evidence that they have been born again, you still need to talk to them about the new birth.

Ted: that's right. And, once again, Whitefield's preaching, in every single sermon, was about the new birth. That's the thing that just jumps out, reading his journal. It's very powerful.

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Okay. So, first of all, the absolute necessity of the new birth. I’m on 4a. then 4b. Suffering. I mean, suffering gets us to submit. And I would say that there are two kinds of suffering. There is suffering for the consequences of your own sin, and then there is suffering with Christ. But both get you to the same place in the end.

So, for the consequences of your own behavior, “whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, so as to live for the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for human passions, but for the will of God.” So, when you suffer because of the things you’ve done wrong, you’re going to be like Pavlov’s dog. You know Pavlov’s dog? The bell rings. The dog eats. The bell rings. The dog eats. The bell rings. The dog eats. But he gets salivating every time. Do you know what we’re talking about when we talk about Pavlov’s dog? So they make the bell ring. No food, but the dog. In the same way, God is going to get you to submit by the suffering for the consequences of your behavior. That’s all there is to it. That’s why you’re in the midst of all the stuff in your life, kin your rebellion, and your unwillingness to submit. God is going to give you joy, knowing that all the stuff you’re experiencing is a way of getting you into shape.

I know that, in my own period, and my own battle with the shadow of death, I went through ten years of rebellion, absolute rebellion, and great sin. It was God who kept on raising the ante. And then He finally put me in a place where I could have been killed. And at that point, He had my attention. But it wasn’t until that. He said, “Okay, here are some consequences.” I can handle those. “Here are some consequences.” I can handle those. “Here are some consequences.” “Again.

“Okay. Somebody is going to come and shoot you.”

Oh, now we’re talking about something a little different, you know. Do I want to live, or do I want to die? If I continue doing this, I’m going to die. If I don’t submit, I’m going to die.

And in AA, addiction recovery, that’s where you always have to get to the point, and say that, if I keep drinking, if I keep taking drugs, I’m going to die. Do I want to die, or do I want to live?

And so there are consequences for our behavior. That’s one way that God gets submission out of us.

And another is that we suffer with Christ. When we’re put into fellowship and union with Him, as He suffers, we suffer too. That is just the way it is. The Christian life is a matter of suffering with Christ. There are also blessings with Christ. But there is plenty of suffering with Him that has nothing to do with our behavior, in terms of any sinful behavior.

Bruce suffers with Christ in his workplace, and he has given plenty of stories. Bruce has done nothing wrong in his workplace. But he still suffers. And you’re going to do nothing wrong, and still suffer, if you are in union with Christ.

“To this you have been called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in His steps.” Ooh! I’m not sure I signed up for that when I became a Christian. That He suffered, and gave me an example, and I’m to follow in His steps? Ooh!

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The impact of both types of suffering, whether it's due to your own sin, or due to suffering with Him, because you're incorporated, you're put into Christ when you're born again, and you suffer with Him, here is a quote from C. S. Lewis. "Pain insists on being attended to. God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks to us in our consciences, but shouts in our pain. It is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world." It's one of Lewis's great quotes. He says, "Pain insists on being attended to." God whispers to you in your pleasures. He speaks to you in your conscience. But He shouts in your pain. That's how God gets your attention.

And one of the great stories from Watchman Nee is found in his book, *The Normal Christian Life*. I love this story. I love this story.

The setting is that Watchman Nee was a great Christian evangelist in the 1920s, '30s and '40s. He's sitting across the table from another brother, and they're discussing what it means to be surrendered to Christ. That's the topic.

So Nee looks at him. Says Nee, "And there was a plate of biscuits between us. I picked up one broken in half, as if to eat it. Then fitting the two pieces together again,--"

Do you see the image? He takes the biscuit, breaks it in half. It looks like he's going to eat it, then he fits it together, and he shows it to the person across the table from him.

"I said, "It looks all right. But it is never quite the same again, is it? But once your back is broken, you will yield ever after to the slightest touch from God."

When your back is broken, through suffering and pain and difficulty, you are more likely to yield after that to the slightest touch from the Master's hand.

I read that once, and I think that's a tremendously powerful image. And I think that's a really appropriate image. And what it does, is that it 'lets us say, "Thank You, Jesus," even in the midst of everything I'm going through, whether it's because of my sin, or because I'm suffering with Christ. But "Thank you. Thank you for breaking my back."

Think about Jacob, who wrestled with the angel of God at the brook of Jabbok. They wrestled all night long. What was the consequence for Jacob afterward? He limped. His hip was thrown out of joint. When you wrestle with God, your hip is going to be thrown out of joint. You're never going to be the same. You're not going to come out of that stronger in your own ability, but hampered and handicapped in your own ability. So, from that point on, you're going to walk like this. (*Ted limps.*) You're not going to be able to run. Some of your natural strength is going to be depleted from you, and gone forever. And that's God's way of getting you to submit.

Okay. I also gave you submission as crucifixion of the flesh. I woke up this morning at two in the morning, except I forgot crucifixion of the flesh. So this is a whole other teaching. This is a great teaching. God also gets us to submit by the crucifixion of the flesh, where the old man, the man that wants to do his own thing, is put to death.

And then, finally, the thing that gets our submission is not only our suffering, but what I'm calling the apostolic disciplines, the disciplines that the apostles gave us. And I'm always astounded that folks go every place else but to these four. These are the four critical things. If you do these four critical things, you will submit more. You'll grow more in grace, and you'll be a more sanctified Christian. Just do these four things. It's

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not complicated. “My yoke is easy, and My burden is light.” This is not a whole series of how to get better. This is very simple.

Okay, what does it say? This is right early, in the story of the church in Acts, just at the very beginning, after the conversion of the three thousand. What did they do? “They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching, “ number one, “to fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and the prayers.” Those are the four things. And that’s the work that the church should be about.

The apostles’ teaching. It’s interesting that the Greek word there is *didache*, and it means the established teaching of the church. In fact, one of the earliest books that we have, that is probably contemporary to some of the oldest writings in the New Testament, is the *Didache*, and it has to do with the established teaching of the early apostles. I think it comes from the Greek word “to teach,” which is *didaskalos*.

And in this, the Scripture talks about “the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the cornerstone.” And the authentication of the truth was because it was taught by the apostles. It was there teaching. It’s not because they went down in 40 A.D. to the local bookstore and picked themselves up a bible. It was because this became what the apostles had taught.

And so we begin with the apostles’ teaching. That’s critical. It’s interesting to me. This is so important that, in Revelation 21,. When it describes the new Jerusalem, it says that the foundation of the city of the new Jerusalem, the foundation stones have the names of the twelve apostles on them. So that new Jerusalem, that great city yet to come, the new heaven and the new earth, when God reveals that to us at the end of time, that foundation is going to be based on Jesus Christ being the chief cornerstone. And all of those foundation stones have the names of the apostolic witness, what the apostles said. And of course, you know that every one of them died because of their faith. Probably eleven were martyred because of their faith.

So the first thing is the apostles’ teaching. We need to get into the word of God. I don’t know how else to get around it.

It’s kind of like in fund raising. Do we need to go out and ask for money? Yes! I mean, how else do you get money unless you ask for it? I mean, are you just going to pray and ask? You’ve got to do that. So you’ve got to read the word of God!

“Well, I don’t understand it very well.” Well, that’s okay. Just dig into it. Find something that’s interesting. Go look. Only capture one verse. If the farthest you can get to with Scripture in one day is one verse, then start there. But start someplace. And that would be the first thing.

The second thing is *the fellowship*. A very interesting word—participation, intimate fellowship. We have the word *koinonia* from it. That’s what the word is. So it’s interesting that all of these verses, the five verses here, all translate the word *koinonia* in a different way, but they all mean fellowship in some fashion or another.

Macedonia and Achaia, (that’s the Greek part), “have been pleased to make some contribution to the poor.” Paul was talking about a contribution. Well, the words “make contribution” is *koinonia*. They were willing to give fellowship to the poor Christians in other places, in Jerusalem actually.

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Next verse. “Begging us earnestly for the favor”—*charis*, grace—“for the grace of taking part in the relief of the saints.” “Taking part in” is the translation of the word *koinonia*. They wanted to be participating in that.

“If there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation,” (*koinonia*) “in the Spirit, any affection, any sympathy.” These are the things we’re supposed to be about.

Number four. “That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and may share” the *koinonia* “in His suffering, becoming like Him in His death.” You know, that’s my life verse, Philippians the third chapter, the tenth verse.

“And if you walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship,” (*koinonia*) “with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.”

So, as you can see, *koinonia* is translated “contribution,” “taking a part in,” “participating in,” “sharing,” “fellowship.” So it’s translated in different ways, but it has to do with this intimate fellowship. And you, as a Christian, will not grow unless you have this fellowship.

It is just unfathomable to me that a person can say he is born again, and have no fellowship with other Christians. And you’ve heard me talk about this before.

You know, when you receive Christ, at your regeneration, when you are born again, Christ comes into you. But you also go into Christ. As Bruce has pointed out, “in Christ” is used five times more frequently than the other expression, which is “Christ in you.” We talk a lot about Jesus coming into my life, coming into my heart. I accept Christ into my heart. But there is another, more prevalent thought, and that is that I’m put into Him.

Now I actually like that better, because the first one strikes me as very individualistic. You know, Jesus came into my heart. It’s me and Jesus. But when I’m put into Christ, the body of Christ is His church. It’s other believers. I’ve got to be with them.

“Oh, but Ted, you know, they’re not sanctified.” Yes, and you aren’t either.
(*Laughter.*)

“well, you know, I don’t like that preaching that preacher preaches.” Well, you’re not very good at your theology either. Give me ten minutes, and I’ll point out some big errors in you. I mean, we’re always very quick to point out the inadequacies of the fellowship, when we’re totally blind to the fact that we’re completely inadequate. So, you know, if you have problems with the inadequacies of people, and don’t want to be with them for that reason, well then, you’re all by yourself, and you’re without Christ, because then you’re not in Christ. Yes?

Participant: I think that word especially is interesting in 1 Corinthians 10. It seems to be the *koinonia* with God. Fellowship with God is synonymous with the fellowship with the body.

Ted: Yes. Thank you.

Participant: and then the question becomes that you say you have fellowship with God when you have no fellowship with the body.

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Ted: Right. I don't think you can. I mean, you've heard me tell the story before. Somebody says, "I have some friends. They were born again. They got very active in the church. But for the last ten years, they haven't gone to church at all."

And I said, "I don't think they're probably born again."

"Now wait a second! No, no, no! You know, once you accept Jesus into your heart, you're always saved."

Okay. Well, if you are, it's going to show some fruit along the way. And one of the key fruits is that you want to be with the body, even though you can't stand them. (*Laughter.*) You know, it's just like I believe everything in the thirty-nine Articles, even the things I don't believe. It's because it's true! It's not because of your experience of it. Your experience is irrelevant compared to the truth of God.

Participant: Hey, Ted?

Ted: Yes?

Participant: The question that keeps coming back to me is when you said at the beginning that you must be born again.

Ted: Yes.

Participant: I think that's a great discussion stopper that really brings it into focus. On the other hand, what you're saying now, is to bring someone into the kingdom of God. Not that you or I can do that, but God brings us into His kingdom, into His body, and we realize where we fall short. And I know we talk a lot about homosexuality, and that's an easy one. And George holds up his Bible, and says, "Oh, we've got to believe the Bible." Well, the Bible also talks about divorce!

Ted: Yes.

Participant: How many of us have been divorced?

Ted: Yes.

Participant: And so we're still in the body of Christ.

Ted: Right.

Participant: and so, what can I say? Isn't there somewhere where we would say that yes, you must be born again, but I struggle with it day to day, and I know you will too.

Ted: Okay, Sig. I think that this whole discussion, (and you just outlined two examples), is that there are huge areas in the evangelical church today that are very dark that we don't admit to.

Sig: Right.

Ted: In the same way, in the 1920s, in the South, and in other places, we thought nothing of being sure that that colored man stepped off the street when I walked down the street. I mean, do you understand what I'm saying? I didn't see it at all! I didn't see it. I was raised in a home where my parents, who, as far as I know, were not prejudiced, but we had a black maid. Her name was Lavana. And I was taught to have pity for her, not to respect her.

Now you would never hear my parents tell a racial joke, or use a racial slur. None of that ever happened. But the attitude was there. And in some way, that was a very dark spot that we missed. And the question I'm asking is, what is the blind spot we're missing today?

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Sig: Our human sexuality.

Ted: Well—

Sig: We don’t get into that.

Ted: Can you just bear with me? I’ve got two more points. I’m starting to lose people. People are closing their Bibles. It’s not done yet.

Okay, the third thing is *the breaking of the bread*. “On the first day of the week, when we had gathered together to break bread.” This is the communion service. “The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ?”

That’s an amazing statement, because what it’s saying there is “bread and wine, body and blood.”

Oh, that’s just symbolic. No, Paul says that it’s a participation in, a *koinonia*, an intimate fellowship with Christ. So that’s why I reject this whole understanding of the symbolic nature of the meaning of the body and blood, because it’s not. It’s a *koinonia*. It’s this intimate participation. Paul says, “The bread that we break, is it not the symbol of the body of Christ?” He doesn’t say that. He uses this very powerful word *koinonia*.

And finally, *the prayers*. The apostles’ teaching, the fellowship, the breaking of bread, and the prayers. An interesting word. To break down the word for *prayer*, exchange and wish, two Greek words. So the question was asked, and somebody raised it with me, if God knows everything, then why do we pray? Well, you want to exchange wishes. You want what you want. “well, Lord, this is what I want, and You tell me what You want.” We’re exchanging those. “and if my wants are not Your wants, let’s find out.” And that’s where you get this intimate sharing in conversation with God. You’re exchanging. “Lord, this is what I want to happen.”

“No, Ted. That’s not your best interest. This is what I want to have happen.” And so that’s that kind of exchange.

So how do we actually submit? We submit by “you must be born again.” You must suffer. Suffering will make you quit rebelling. And then you must be involved in Scripture reading, in the fellowship, in the prayers, and in the breaking of bread. All those are the things that lead to greater submission. Jim is going to ask one question, and then we’ll go.

Jim: (*Unclear.*) Scripture is listed first, and it informs the other three.

Ted: Yes.

Jim: for our understanding of the other three, we need the Word.

Ted: You’re exactly right. We won’t understand what it means to have fellowship, prayers, or breaking bread, if we don’t go with the apostles’ teaching. What did the apostles say? What did the eyewitnesses say? Who were the select Twelve? What did they have to say? That, in time, becomes the scripture, and is put in a book.

Okay. Well, go in peace, and we’ll see you next week.

Participant: How do you know when you’re born again?

Ted: well, that’s the question. How do you know when you’re born again? That is lecture number 353, for a love offering of \$19.99. (*Laughter.*) I will send you that, along with a picture of my family, and a prayer cloth. (*Laughter.*)

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Participant: Evangelize! People don't care how much you know until you show how much you care.