

Philippians Chapter 2
Part 2
The Submissive Mind
'Joy in spite of people'

Our mind is our greatest source of despair or hope.

The **submissive** mind is not the product of an hour's sermon or a week's seminar or even a year's service. The submissive mind grows in us as we actively **choose** to go the way of the Spirit within and to develop the mind of Christ.

When we are called by God and respond, we are born again from above and we embark on a journey into the heart of God that is designed to transform the way we **think**.

Proverbs 23:7 NKJV

'As a man thinks in his heart, so is he'.

Philippians 2:12-18

Mark Twain wrote *'Few things are harder to put up with than the annoyance of a good example'*. The most annoying thing about a good example is the fact that very often we cannot achieve the same thing in our own lives.

It takes more than an example on the outside; it takes the power on the inside. Paul has presented Jesus to us: Jesus who is our great example in the exercise of a submissive mind and will. We read the scriptures, but how do we go about practising them? The answer to this challenge is that we first need to understand how we are made.

Man comprises three parts, body, soul and spirit. So far so good - the problem arises the moment that we are born again *from above*. The soul – our mind, emotions and will, has had undisputed control over our thinking and our bodies since we were born from beneath, *'of the earth, earthly,'* (John 3:31) and now the human spirit is enlivened and desires to take precedence.

When God created Adam as a living soul, his human spirit was connected to the Lord and in constant contact with Him; as a result of the fall a moral dislocation took place which severed that contact with Him and every living soul born since that moment has been born with an unconnected human spirit. They are alive and walking about, but *spiritually* they have no life. The rebirth connects that part of us back again to the Godhead, the Holy Spirit enlivening our human spirit, which promptly requires to take back the ground it lost. The soul is **not** a happy bunny at this point! From making all the executive decisions about this body, it is asked to relinquish control and allow the Holy Spirit to take charge. A battle ensues.

Paul sets before us the divine pattern for the submissive mind and the divine power to accomplish what God commands. The Spirit must control the soul and this is achieved through the day to day choices we make and our willingness (or otherwise) to submit and surrender, to the Lordship of

Christ in us. There are now two wills at work in the believer, the will of the Holy Spirit who is in you 'both to will and to do' and your human will.

Philippians 2:13

Galatians 2:20

The Christian life is not a series of ups and downs; it is a process of ins and outs. God works in us and we work out, what He works in. Simple. We cultivate the submissive mind by responding to the divine provision, the indwelling Holy Spirit, Who God makes available to us.

1. There is a purpose to achieve:

The first is seen in -

Philippians 2:12 - 16 AMP

¹² Therefore, my dear ones, as you have always obeyed [my suggestions], so now, not only [with the enthusiasm you would show] in my presence but much more because I am absent, work out (cultivate, carry out to the goal, and fully complete) your own salvation with reverence and awe and trembling (self-distrust, with serious caution, tenderness of conscience, watchfulness against temptation, timidly shrinking from whatever might offend God and discredit the name of Christ).¹³[Not in your own strength] for it is God Who is all the while effectually at work in you [energizing and creating in you the power and desire], both to will and to work for His good pleasure and satisfaction and delight. ¹⁴Do all things without grumbling and faultfinding and complaining [against God] and questioning and doubting [among yourselves],¹⁵That you may show yourselves to be blameless and guiltless, innocent and uncontaminated, children of God without blemish (faultless, unrebukable) in the midst of a crooked and wicked generation [spiritually perverted and perverse], among whom you are seen as bright lights (stars or beacons shining out clearly) in the [dark] world,¹⁶Holding out [to it] and offering [to all men] the Word of Life, so that in the day of Christ I may have something of which exultantly to rejoice and glory in that I did not run my race in vain or spend my labour to no purpose.'

Working out your salvation:

When verse 12 talks about 'working out your own salvation' it is not talking about salvation by works instead of grace, it is saying that you have been saved, you are being saved and you will be saved, you are a work in progress *with which you have need to co-operate*. God is purposeful toward you – He says 'I **know** the plans I have for you' – our part is fully to co-operate with those plans by making room and making it easy for the Holy Spirit, to work within us. That will mean that your soul will have to take second place to the Spirit – it will have to come under the Holy Spirit's executive control.

So the phrase means 'work to the finishing point', work towards maturity, don't stay a baby Christian, plan to grow. In the original language one of the meanings of the phrase was in a mathematical context, Paul was saying in the same way as you work out a mathematical problem,

work out your salvation, keep working on it until you solve it. It also meant working in a mine to get everything of value out of it, or working a field to get the best possible harvest.

It is spelt

E F F O R T !

We cannot just hope it will happen, it happens as a result of the **Godly** choices we make. And the reason we are to work out our own salvation is found in –

Romans 8:29-30 The Message

‘God knew what he was doing from the very beginning. He decided from the outset to shape the lives of those who love him along the same lines as the life of his Son. The Son stands first in the line of humanity he restored. We see the original and intended shape of our lives there in him. After God made that decision of what his children should be like, he followed it up by calling people by name. After he called them by name, he set them on a solid basis with himself. And then, after getting them established, he stayed with them to the end, gloriously completing what he had begun.’

Yes, there are problems in life, but God will use them to help us work out what He is working in. Our lives have tremendous potential, like a mine or a field God wants us to find every treasure He has placed in us, and realise it to its fullest potential. If you want to know more about this, visit Graham Cooke’s website www.brilliantbookhouse.com and look for ‘Stepping into your truest identity’ it is available as an MP3 download, or as a CD, I highly recommend you listen to it. One of the most wonderful things about becoming a Christian is finding out that God has a plan for our lives that far surpasses anything we could possibly imagine.

Ephesians 2:10

1 Corinthians 11:1

Philippians 2:14, 15

The world has nothing to offer us - we are the ones who have and can hold out, the word of life, with confidence, knowing that God has a plan for each person, to prosper them, not harm them, if only they will accept it. As we as individuals become increasingly secure in our position in Christ and the plan the Father has for us, we will indeed shine as lights in the firmament in an increasingly dark world.

You notice Paul doesn’t tell us to retreat into some sort of spiritual isolation because it is only as we are confronted with the needs and problems of real life that we begin to become more like Jesus.

It is not by *leaving* the world, but by ministering *to it* that we see God’s purpose fulfilled in our lives. Whether your time is spent in the home or the office, you are never off duty as far as God is concerned, wherever you are is your field of ministry, there is no division between the secular and

the sacred. The people around us are those Christ died to save, we are the only epistle they may ever read. Remember -

*'You are writing a gospel,
A chapter each day,
By the deeds that you do
And the words that you say,
Men read what you write, whether faithful or true
Just what is the gospel according to you?'*

Our best Gospel message is **Who** Jesus is for us. For me, He is the kindest person I have ever met in my whole life; He is the most patient, the most gentle and the most longsuffering. I love His sense of humour, His constancy, His laughter, He is Wonderful.

2. There is something to receive:

Here is the second thing; there is something to receive – power for the task.

Philippians 2:13 The Message

'That energy is God's energy, an energy deep within you, God himself willing and working at what will give him the most pleasure.'

The principle Paul is laying down here is God cannot do through us what He hasn't been able to do in us. The Father is always more interested in the workman than the work, the baby not the bathwater. He is relational first and foremost; **everything** we do will flow out of our relationship with Him. He gave us the indwelling Holy Spirit in order that we might know Him, God with us, Emmanuel.

We must never work for God because of outside pressure, which is pressure to perform. God doesn't do performance Christianity! As we flow with the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit, God's work is unconsciously done through us, from the inside to the outside. He will be Himself, you will be yourself, and that will be enough. Delightful.

Sometimes we have a tendency to please men rather than to obey God but when you surrender to the power of the Holy Spirit within, obedience to God becomes a delight not a battle, the power of the Holy Spirit works within us both to will and to do.

John 14:16, 17 and 26

Acts 1:8

1 Corinthians 6:19-20

The selfsame Holy Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead and empowered Him when he was on this earth, can and will empower you for the task He has for you. He will also speak to you through three tools –

1. The scriptures –

1 Thessalonians 2:13

The word of God is at work in us: the same word that brought the universe into being can and will release divine power into our lives, if we allow it. Our responsibility is to *receive* the word into our hearts. To receive it means more than just listening to it and reading it. To receive the word means we embrace it and make it part of our lives. It becomes flesh upon us as it is lived out. We listen, read and study - with a view to obeying.

Matthew 12:13 AMP

'Then He said to the man, Reach out your hand. And the man reached it out and it was restored, as sound as the other one.'

The man with the withered hand had to do his part. He stretched out his hand, Jesus healed.

Matthew 14:22 – 29

Peter had to put his foot over the side of the boat to find out whether he could walk on the water.

2. Prayer –

If we want God's power working in and through us we must spend time daily with the word of God and prayer. Prayer is the second tool God uses.

Ephesians 3:20

Colossians 1:29 NIV

'To this end I labour, struggling with all his energy, which so powerfully works in me.'

Romans 8:26, 27

The word of God and prayer go together, you will never grow as a Christian if you neglect either of these disciplines. And the third tool God uses is –

3. Suffering –

The Spirit of God works in us even when we face discomfort and sometimes suffering.

Acts 16:19 – 24

Here we see the account of Paul and Silas in jail at Philippi. They have been stripped, beaten and severely flogged. Suffering. In the face of this we find them both praying and singing hymns, Paul is living his own injunction to us to *'give thanks in all circumstances for that is the will of God for you'*. These men, fearlessly declaring the Good News, were not giving thanks for having been beaten,

although they would probably have been thanking God for being **considered worthy** to suffer on Christ's behalf, they were praising and thanking God because He had not left them. He was with them in the thick of what they were experiencing and they knew it. They were doing His will, in the way He wanted it done and flogging and persecution were part of the package – it did not surprise them.

Acts 5:41 King James Version

*'And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted **worthy to suffer** shame for his name.'*

Suffering is part of life and the Spirit of God works in us even when we face suffering.

God's response to the praise and prayer going up from the jail is an earthquake and the result of the earthquake is the salvation of the jailer and his family.

Acts 16:25-32

In spite of his own circumstances, Paul's concern is for the jailer – *'do not harm yourself we are all here.'* The kind of love that Paul displayed moved the jailer's heart – *'what must I do to be saved?'* Incidentally, as an aside, you note that the moment they believed, the whole household were baptised. Baptism is not an optional extra, when you believe, be baptised.

So the word of God, prayer and suffering are three tools that God uses in our lives. Just as electricity runs through a conductor, so the Holy Spirit works through the means God ordains for us.

Romans 8:28

1 Peter 4:12 NIV

Suffering for Being a Christian

'¹²Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you.'

Peter here tells us we are not to be surprised at painful trials - they are God's instruments to form the nature of Christ within us.

These three tools, the scriptures, prayer and suffering work together to provide the spiritual power we need to glorify Jesus. It is our **attitude** during the trials which brings Him glory. He does not gain glory if we are filled with grumbling and complaining, but when we are rejoicing in tribulation knowing *'that tribulation works patience, and patience, experience; and experience, hope.'* (Romans 5:2-4 King James Version) then we are bringing Him glory.

If we are to have such a submissive mind and the joy that goes with it, we must recognise there is a purpose to achieve - God's plan for our lives, a power to receive and a promise to believe.

3. A promise to believe:

So what is the promise? The **joy** that comes from a submissive mind and posture before God. The world's philosophy is that happiness comes from fighting to get what you want – if you want it, fight for it. Jesus is the proof that the world is wrong. He never used a sword or any other weapon yet He won the greatest battle in history, the battle against sin, death and hell. He defeated hatred by manifesting love. He overcame lies with truth, and because He surrendered He was victorious – you and I must **dare to believe** the promises of –

Luke 14:11

Matthew 5:3

There is a twofold blessing of joy for those who possess and practice a submissive spirit and mind towards God.

Philippians 2:16-18

There is joy now and joy to come.

Matthew 25:21

The faithful one will discover that the sufferings on earth have been transformed into glory in heaven –

1 Corinthians 15:18 New American Standard Bible

'Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord.'

The words here '*steadfast, immovable*' indicate moral fixity. A position from which you will not be moved.

Hebrews 12:1, 2 NASB

Jesus, the Example

'¹Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, ²fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.'

We don't have to wait for the return of Jesus to start experiencing the joy of a submissive mind. That joy can be a present reality.

Philippians 2:17-18

The kind of joy we are talking about comes through sacrifice and service. Though many of us associate suffering with sorrow, Paul shows us that suffering and sacrifice are doorways into deeper joy in Jesus. In verse 17 Paul is comparing his experience of sacrifice as that of being poured out as a

drink offering – this was a priestly service – and he likens his death to wine being poured out. As a Jewish man, brought up on the teachings of Gamaliel, (Acts 22:3) he refers to –

Numbers 15:1-10 NKJV

'¹The LORD said to Moses, ² "Speak to the Israelites and say to them: 'After you enter the land I am giving you as a home ³ and you present to the LORD offerings made by fire, from the herd or the flock, as an aroma pleasing to the LORD -whether burnt offerings or sacrifices, for special vows or freewill offerings or festival offerings- ⁴ then the one who brings his offering shall present to the LORD a grain offering of a tenth of an ephah of fine flour mixed with a quarter of a hin of oil. ⁵ With each lamb for the burnt offering or the sacrifice, prepare a quarter of a hin of wine as a drink offering. ⁶ " 'With a ram prepare a grain offering of two-tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with a third of a hin of oil, ⁷ and a third of a hin of wine as a drink offering. Offer it as an aroma pleasing to the LORD. ⁸ " 'When you prepare a young bull as a burnt offering or sacrifice, for a special vow or a fellowship offering to the LORD, ⁹ bring with the bull a grain offering of three-tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with half a hin of oil. ¹⁰ Also bring half a hin of wine as a drink offering. It will be an offering made by fire, an aroma pleasing to the LORD.'

Paul knew that it was possible that his trial would go against him and he would be put to death, but that thought did not rob him of his joy. He saw his possible death as a willing sacrifice and service on behalf of Jesus and His church and that would have given Paul joy.

So sacrifice and service are marks of a submissive mind and the submissive mind will provide joy even in the midst of suffering.

There is one major element we need in exercising the submissive mind and that is – faith. We must believe God's promises to us are true and that they are going to work in our lives, just as they worked in Paul's – if He calls you, He will not only be with you but His grace will enable you to do everything He asks – with joy.

Our lives are not a series of ups and downs; they are a sequence of delightful 'ins' and 'outs' as God works in and through us His purpose to perform.

Our example comes from Jesus, the energy comes from the Holy Spirit and the result is joy.

