

Submission to God's Word and Providence

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[0 : 00] Turn into your Bibles to Hebrews chapter 12. Hebrews chapter 12, and we'll read verses 1 through 13.

Let's stand as we read this portion of God's Word. Hebrews 12, 1 through 13, he starts out by referring to a great cloud of witnesses, and that's the people that he was just talking about in chapter 11, that great hall of faith, those people that witness to us that it is worth serving the Lord, even though we don't get our full reward here.

We trust and we look forward, we look ahead to our reward. Those are the people that are witnessing to us. Let's read God's Word, chapter 12, 1 through 13.

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.

Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

[1 : 25] Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood, and you have forgotten that word of encouragement that addresses you as sons.

My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son.

Endure hardship as discipline. God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? If you are not disciplined, and everyone undergoes discipline, then you are illegitimate children and not true sons.

Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us, and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the father of our spirits and live?

Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best, but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness. No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful.

[2 : 44] Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it. Therefore, strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees.

Make level paths for your feet, so that the lame may not be disabled, but rather healed. Submit yourselves then to the Lord.

James 4 and verse 7. That was our starting point, our launching point for this series of messages on submission. Submission.

The Greek word used and translated submit is *hupotasso*, a compound word meaning to place and under.

And so the meaning, the most basic meaning of the word is to place under. And when we're talking about submitting to God, it means to put ourselves under God.

[3 : 41] The Bible says that he made us, and therefore he has potter's rights over us. The rights, the authority to command us and to judge us. And his commands are given us in his word, the Bible.

And their holy commandments, and their right commandments, their good commandments, their for our good. And yet, the Bible says that all of us who have been born in Adam's nature, all of us who have descended from Adam, do not submit to God's law, but rather show our hostility to God by refusing to submit to his law.

Romans 8, 7, that the sinful mind is enmity against God, and it will not submit to God's law. Indeed, it cannot submit.

Well, that means we're all lawbreakers, and as such, we've lost our original righteousness. We've lost righteousness, which is what we need to enter into heaven.

So where shall we find it? And there's only two ways that men seek this righteousness. Some seek it by way of their own works. And that's a dead-end street.

[4 : 50] It doesn't get to heaven because all of our works are tainted with sin. There is none righteous, no, not one. Yet, in the gospel, a righteousness has been made known.

A righteousness from God. A perfect righteousness. A righteousness that is not by works, but by faith in Jesus Christ.

There's the way to become righteous. And we saw last week in Romans 10 and verse 3 that the Jews were seeking it by their own righteousness and did not submit to God's way of righteousness.

Again, it's a matter of submission. We wouldn't submit to his law, and by nature, we don't want to submit to his gospel. We would like to think that we pulled ourselves up and made ourselves worthy for heaven.

And God says we must come with empty hands to him and receive righteousness as a free gift worked out by Jesus' righteous obedience and put to the account of all who trust in him.

[5 : 59] So, to sum up the first two lessons, we see that the Bible calls us to submit to God's law. And then we see that the gospel calls us to submit to his gospel, his way of being coming right with God.

Now, this morning, we're going to see two more things that we are to submit to. The first is God's word, and then we'll look at our submission to God's providence. First of all, submission to God's word.

You say, well, didn't you just say that we've already studied submission to God's law? Yes, we are to submit to God's commands and his laws, but you know the Bible has a lot more than commands.

And so, we need to consider that aspect of submission to him as well. There are teachings, there are truth propositions, claims of truth made in the word of God.

They're not commands, they're statements of fact. And here, we are called to submit ourselves and to receive and accept everything that God says as being true.

[7 : 08] That submission that we owe to God, not only to obey his commands, but to believe his teachings and to accept them as truth.

So, James 1.21 commands us to humbly accept the word planted in you which can save you.

How are we to receive this book? Humbly accept it. Humbly receive it. That means humbly putting my mind under God's mind and believing whatever he tells me in his word just because he tells me, you see.

That's his authority. Again, he made me. And he speaks to me and what he says is true. And so, I am to submit to what he says is true.

Whether I understand it or not, whether I agree with it or not. In fact, it's especially then when I don't understand it, that I'm really being challenged, will I submit to God's word?

[8 : 17] You see, if I understand it and agree with it, I'm really not putting myself under anything or anyone. It's when I can't understand and I may not agree that I'm called to submit.

You see, to humbly put my mind under his. So, take the very first verse of the Bible. In the beginning, what does it say, kids?

God created the heavens and the earth, right? Now, that clearly goes beyond our limits of understanding and of experience, doesn't it?

Maybe even goes against what we think we know. From our experience, we know everything in life has a beginning. Take yourself.

There was a time when you were not. You remember that? Of course you don't. You were not. And then, you were conceived in your mother's womb and you began.

[9 : 17] You had a beginning. And then you came forth and we celebrate your birthday. because you had a beginning. Take our nation. It did not exist before 1776.

And then, it had a beginning. And we celebrate it every 4th of July. Take our world, our universe. It hasn't always been here.

It too had a beginning. And so, in catechizing our children, we ask, who made you? And the children say, God made me.

And we say, well, what else did God make? And they say, God made all things. And then, they ask us, and dad, who made God?

And that's when we tell them, ah, no one made God. He doesn't have a beginning before the mountains were born.

[10 : 20] Or he brought forth the earth and the world from everlasting to everlasting. He's God, son. So different from us in that way. In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.

So that when the universe got its birth, God was already there. He already was. There's never been a time when he was not.

The uncreated creator who was and is and is to come. Daddy, I can't understand that. Neither can I, son.

It does go beyond the limits of our understanding. It's way over my head, too. But isn't he an awesome God to have never had a beginning?

And shouldn't we worship him and thank him that he's not like us in that way and give him the praise that he's due? This is truth outside of the box of our own thoughts and understanding and experience.

[11 : 24] So again, the issue that hits us right from the get-go of Genesis 1-1 is will we submit our minds to God?

Will we put our minds under his and say, teach me what to think. Teach me what to believe. That's submitting to his word.

Well, as far as the universe itself, God's word tells us he created it out of nothing just by speaking it into existence. Psalm 33, by the word of the Lord were the heavens made their starry host by the breath of his mouth.

Oh, let all the earth fear the Lord. Let all the peoples of the world revere him for he spoke and it came to be. He commanded and it stood firm.

Now, according to God's word, then our universe is not the result of natural causes of time and chance, but the immediate result of a supernatural cause, the eternal God revealed in Scripture.

[12 : 33] Oh, but scientists tell us that that never happens. We've never seen that happen, so it couldn't have happened. And God might say, excuse me?

who are you? Were you there when the world had its beginning? You must have been there the way you speak so confidently of it couldn't have happened that way.

Oh, no, you weren't. You weren't there? Oh, I was there. You then must be a mere creature of time, born yesterday and don't know what's going to happen tomorrow, and yet you think yourself qualified to deny me the God of eternity for my glory of speaking.

And that which was nothing suddenly became a universe. We live in a world of truth deniers, truth suppressors, Romans 18 calls them.

The very world that God made and says reveals his glory. We say, no, it couldn't have happened that way.

[13 : 50] So, again, who will I believe? My mind? My puny mind? A mind perhaps informed by so-called scientists and their puny minds?

Or will I submit and put my mind under God's mind and say, tell me, Lord, how did it happen? You were there. I wonder if you've noticed the way that both testaments of the Bible begin.

The Old Testament begins with this supernatural creation by God. How does the New Testament begin? by a supernatural birth from a virgin.

It's not like God says, well, we're going to wait until they get halfway through the Bible and then we'll break it to them. No, it's right from the get-go. You open your Bible, in the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth.

Matthew 1, oh, a virgin gives birth to a child. As if to say, you will never profit from this birth, this book, unless you come and humbly submit yourself under it.

[15 : 08] Submit yourself, therefore, to God and He'll teach you and He'll, in His light, you will see light. So we come to this book not to sit as judges upon it and to decide what we think is true and false, but we come and say, God, you tell me what's true and tell me what's false.

God, you tell me what's real and what's lies and I will believe whatever you say just because you say it.

That's what it means. God said it, I believe it and that settles it, you see. And that's no small part of what it means to walk humbly with your God to submit yourself, therefore, to God.

And so there's a host of things in this book that I would never believe if He didn't tell me. How about the Trinity? That He is one God and yet He exists in three persons, not three gods, just one, but in three.

I don't understand that, do you? But He said it, so I believe it. How about Jesus Himself, that He's fully God, He is the eternal creator from everlasting to everlasting, and yet He's a man as real as you and me.

[16 : 28] I don't understand how those two natures can come together and not have Jesus be a man of split personality. One person, but two natures. How about the fact that God is sovereign over everything, in control of all that happens, and yet man is fully responsible for every decision, every word, every motive, every deed He does.

How do those two things work? People stumble over the doctrine of election, that God chooses those He will save. People stumble over eternal punishments for all who die outside of Jesus Christ.

Many things like that. And the issue, the issue in every one of them is this. Will I submit to the word of God, my creator?

So that's the first point today. We submit not only to His commands, His laws, we submit to His gospel, but we submit to every teaching of His word.

And now lastly, submission to God's providence. By God's providence, I simply mean His control, His governance over all His creatures and all their actions all the time.

[17 : 48] So it's in all-inclusive control, as Ephesians 1.11 tells us, because He works out everything in conformity with the purpose of His will.

Everything is an all-inclusive word and excludes nothing. Everything that happens in our lives then, the good, the bad, and the ugly, and especially the ugly is what we're looking at this morning.

It's all been ordained. It's all been directed, traced upon our dial by the Son of love. His providence, His all-wise, kind providence.

So submitting to God's providence in our lives can be even harder than submitting our minds to His word, even harder than submitting our minds to His law, to obey His law, to submit in those circumstances that rub us the wrong way.

Things we don't like at all. We even hate them. Painful things, irritating things, evil things that happen to us. And yet the Bible calls us clear and sure to submit to God in these painful providences.

[19 : 09] I wonder if you picked up on that from our Scripture reading from Hebrews 12. Turn there with me. Hebrews 12. Painful providences were tempting these Hebrew Christians to grow weary and lose heart.

They were, yes, being tempted to chuck it all and to go back to their Christless Judaism because it was costing them too dearly. all the persecution, the trials, the sufferings.

And yet, this writer to the Hebrews says, far from discouraging you and making you doubt God's love, these painful providences should encourage you.

Why? Because God's treating you like He always treats His true sons. God is treating you like those He has the special love for as those who are in His family.

You see, these things are proof of your adoption. Proof that you are truly God's child. So we come to verse 7 and we're told, endure hardship, tribulation, trouble, as discipline.

[20 : 26] Accept it. Endure it. as child training. God is treating you as sons. And so all these hardships and troubles and difficulties that come into your life are part of growing up.

God is growing you up. The Father is toughening you. He's strengthening you. He's correcting you. He's making you more like His perfect Son, Jesus Christ.

And you know that He had to go through the same child training. It's spoken of earlier that fix your eyes on Jesus. Did He ever suffer?

Consider Him who endured such opposition from sinful men so that you don't grow worse. Yes, He had to suffer. Not the discipline of correction for He never sinned, but the discipline of child training, of having tough things to go through so that He grew stronger.

As a man, He increased in knowledge and in strength and in favor with God and man. Hebrews 5.9 says, although He was a son, He learned obedience by the things that He suffered.

[21 : 37] You see, the Father has just one son without sin, but no sons without suffering. Not even the Lord Jesus. He was learning in those hard times in His experience to say to His Father, not my will, but yours be done.

That's submission. He was learning by experience to say over and over in things little and things big, not my will, but yours be done.

I submit my will to yours. The loss of His dear adopted father, Joseph, must have cut him to the heart.

Not my will, Father. Yours be done. Being despised and rejected by His own brothers, not my will, Father, but yours be done.

Despised and rejected by His fellow Jews, His countrymen that He had come from heaven to save. Not my will. Yours be done. You see, He's going through child training.

[22 : 49] He's learning obedience by the things that He suffered, being despised and rejected, misunderstood, slandered, falsely accused and condemned, beaten, whipped, and then nailed to a cross of torment.

God's old Son was no stranger to suffering. He was treating Him as a true son and if you're a true son, you too will receive this child training as well as the corrective training that Jesus didn't need.

And so, He comes to verse 9 and He says, Moreover, we've all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. And that respect grows the older and wiser we get because we realize the wisdom and the love behind fathers discipline of us.

And then He says, how much more should we hupotasso, submit to the father of our spirits and really live?

Live. There it is. How much more if you submitted to your human fathers? How much more should you submit to your heavenly father?

[24 : 07] Verse 10, Because our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best and let's be honest, sometimes they got it right and other times they got it wrong. But God is always right.

You see what it says? But God disciplines us for our good, for our profit because He always knows what will bring about the greatest good for us. And what is that greatest good?

He goes on to say in the next phrase that we may share in His holiness because He knows we'll only be happy when we're holy and He seeks our holiness, our likeness to Jesus.

No discipline seems pleasant at the time but painful. If it's not painful, it's not discipline. But later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.

So what a heavenly Father in perfect wisdom directing these painful trials our way in order to profit us with this rich harvest of our good, our holiness, our righteousness, and shalom, peace.

[25 : 20] Oh, then how much more should we submit to the Father of our spirits and live? He's just treating us as His well-beloved children. So, what does this submission to God's providence look like?

What does it look like in real life? Well, there's King David and he's running from the palace. He's fleeing Jerusalem. Why? Because his own son, Absalom, has started a coup, a rebellion, and has gathered enough forces to chase him out of his palace.

And he's running for his life, doesn't know what the end will be. And it's exacerbated by the fact that it's his own son. But it gets worse.

It was a painful providence. You with him there running out of Jerusalem? It gets worse because as he's fleeing, he comes upon a man on the hillside above.

His name's Shimei and he's cursing David and he's pelting him and his officers with stones. Though all the troops and the special guard were on David's right and left.

- [26 : 33] Cursing, he says, get out, get out. You man of blood, you scoundrel, the Lord has repaid you for all the blood you shed in the household of Saul and whose place you now reign.
- God's handed the kingdom over to your son. You've come to ruin because you're a man of blood, you scoundrel. And his commander says to David, why should this dead dog curse my Lord, the king?
- Let me go over and cut off his head. All he needed was a nod from David and it was done. The king answered, what do you and I have in common?
- If he's cursing, it's because the Lord said to him, curse David. Who can ask, why do you do this? If God has told him curse, who can ask, why do you do this?
- Leave him alone. Let him curse for the Lord has told him to. It may be that the Lord will see my distress and repay me with good for the cursing I am receiving today. And so on they went on their journey, showered with curses and stones and dirt clods all the way and it says they arrived weary at their destination.
- [27 : 51] You can imagine why. It was a painful providence and how does he respond? He doesn't seek revenge. David humbly submitted to the providence and why?
- How? How? Because he knew it came from God. It was directed upon his life by God. In what sense had God told Shimei to curse him?
- Well, just in that sense that David knew that this would not have happened to him without God's providence. That the very breath with which Shimei was using to curse David came from God.
- And if God didn't want it to happen, he could withhold the next breath from Shimei. And the very strength that he had to throw the stones at him and pelt him came from God.
- And if God wanted to strike him dead, he could, but he didn't. So what does he draw from that? This is God's will for me right now to be in this situation. And so I will humbly bow and submit what I want and my ease and my rest to what God has decided is now good for me to be going through.
- [29 : 08] He leaves Shimei in God's hands and he looks to God to turn it into a blessing for him. Perhaps he'll see the cursing I'm getting today and turn it into a blessing.
- So let's learn from David. We need to see God's hand in our providences, our painful providences. Oh, it is the trick of the devil to just make us focus on the pain and the providence itself, the circumstance without seeing the hand that has brought it to us.
- That's what David's teaching us here. We see God's hand and so we don't fight against his providence but sweetly submit to them because they come from him.
- That means we don't submit with a bitter angry spirit like Jonah when God withered his vine and leaves him in the sun and God doesn't do what he wants God to do and destroy the Ninevites.
- He was angry. No, we submit our will to his. We put ourselves under his providence and it's not like the naughty child who was made to stand in the corner and from the corner he says, well, I may be standing on the inside but I'm sitting on the outside but I'm sitting on the inside.
- [30 : 24] No, that's not submitting to God. It's coming and sweetly submitting ourselves to his will. Matthew Henry, the 17th century pastor whose commentary on the whole Bible has blessed countless thousands was married for 18 months when his wife gave birth to a daughter and then herself died at age 25.
- 18 months later he remarried and they had a daughter who barely lived a year and then she died and in his diary he wrote, this cuts close but oh Lord, I submit.
- I submit. He understood. He understood what Hebrews 12 is saying. That when God brings painful trials we submit to the father of our spirits and live.

They had another daughter she lived but three weeks. So within four years he buried a wife and two daughters and again he writes the Lord is righteous. He takes and he gives and gives and takes again.

I desire to submit. There's this weakness coming through. Have you found with your troubles that it's it's not a one and done thing for you to come and submit to the Lord?

[31 : 46] Okay Lord, if this is what you've chosen for me, I submit. Do you expect to just go home to heaven with that one time submission? You're in for a surprise.

You know that. No. We need to submit over and over and that's what Henry is saying. Yes, I submit Lord and it happens again and again.

I desire to submit and oh the Lord sees that heart and he helps us. what a gracious father he is and he's teaching us to say not my will but yours be done and where did that come from?

That's from Jesus, isn't it? He's the perfect submitter and there in the garden of Gethsemane just hours before he's nailed to the cross he's looking at the cup that God has put into his hands and there's hell in that cup there's God's wrath in that cup there's separation from God there's God's anger punishing sin it's the hell that you and I would have been suffering for eternity in that cup no wonder he prayed Father if it be possible let this cup pass from me but it was always attended with this sweet submission none of the less not my will but yours be done three times he prays sweating great drops of blood crying loud cries to God and there was no other way he accepts the cup he does put himself under God's will and drinks the cup and that's the model for us and that's where our strength is found to do the same ourselves can you see the humility that's needed turn to 1 Peter 5 1 Peter 5

Thomas Boston was an 18th century minister in Scotland and his life was full of very many painful providences in his home his wife's health his churches and he wrote a book about it not about his own troubles but about the answer and it was called The Crook in the Lot taken from Ecclesiastes 7 13 who can make straight what God has made crooked and he's all about things in our lives that are no longer straight the way they should be that God has made them crooked by his providence he's allowed this to happen he sent that to happen and there are things in our life that are now crooked and they're painfully crooked and we can't make them straight we can't fix them we can't make them go away well that's what Boston was bumping into the crooks in the lot and that was his book and his first point is for us to recognize these crooks as God's making who can make straight what God has made crooked

[34 : 56] God in his wisdom God in his love God in his perfect plan has made something crooked in our lives for a good end we need to trace it back to his hand of providence tailor making this trial for us that's absolutely crucial Boston says if we are ever to be able to submit to God in that providence we've got to see it's his hand that brings it and then Boston gives the whole last half of his book to opening up this text 1 Peter 5 the second half of verse 5 God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble humble yourselves therefore under God's mighty hand that he may lift you up in due time casting all your cares upon him because he cares for you although the word submission is missing in this text its essence is present everywhere isn't it humble yourselves under

God's mighty hand put yourself under that submission and humility is absolutely essential it's mentioned twice in this these few verses and so Peter traces his his troubles back to the source they come from God's mighty hand he's brought this into my life so my duty in this painful providence is to humble myself under his mighty hand as God God's hand brought you a humbling circumstance then you need to get your spirit in a humble frame under his humble circumstance match your heart to the humble circumstance by submitting to it without proudly murmuring or complaining as if you deserve better or without the world's reluctance or reluctant resignation to fate well we can't change it so I guess what can we do but just submit

I mean that's not Christian submission at all no Christian submission as a person God's mighty hand he brings it to me I humble myself under his mighty hand and that is our duty in God's hard providences and Peter gives us three helps to motivate us to do this humbly as unto the Lord three encouraging promises I'll just try to mention them briefly number one the promise of grace from God rather than opposition God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble humble yourselves therefore under God's mighty hand I don't know about you but there are no greater times in my life when I need grace from God than when I'm under painful providences I can't afford to have God as my opponent then I need him as my help you see the help to submitting because God opposes the proud the bitter the angry with God man but he gives grace humble yourselves therefore and you'll taste that grace that helps you and strengthens you and enables you to go on with a grace that is sufficient for us and there's a second promise that as we humble ourselves under his mighty hand he will lift you up he will lift you up your circumstances have left you low low in money low in security low in friendship low in health low in comfort low in loved ones low in men's praise he will lift you up who will lift

God's mighty hand remember it's that same mighty hand that brought the difficulty he is able to lift it out it's a mighty hand and if you'll look closely it's a nail pierced hand to tell you how much he loves you as he has you in his school of affliction isn't that encouraging to our submission ah I can submit to the one who will lift lift me up in due time you know when due time is it's his time because he knows the perfect time when is a when is a peach best eaten four months or four weeks before it's ripe you can have it or or picked from the tree ripe so it runs down your chin onto your chest

God knows when to pick the suffering and lift us out of it in due time in his time and that's part of submission we submit under God's hand that in due time his time he will lift it maybe tomorrow maybe in heaven but I know this he always picks the best time and he's famous for acting on behalf of those who wait for him so I'll wait for him you see the encouragement because of who God is and then lastly the promise that he cares for us casting all your cares upon him for he cares for you we know that verse we sometimes rip it out of its context and it's sweet the context is painful providences and you're under them and you're waiting on God what do you need to know as you wait on

[40 : 44] God you need to know he cares for you he's concerned for you he loves you and this providence has come from a loving hand oh I can submit a whole lot easier if I know that he cares for me and where does he show that care and concern so clearly as at Calvary that Jesus Christ was damned in my place he cared that much for me I can I can safely cast my cares on him because I know that if he didn't hold back his own life for me he will not hold back anything that I need and he's the one that can determine what I need well let's rest then let's rest in his care let's humbly submit to his providences in our lives doesn't mean we don't pray for the situation to change but we ask and we don't demand we don't ever demand and we trust the answer to him who cares for us more than we do ourselves our lives are far better off in his hands than they are in our own he knows the end from the beginning we don't know tomorrow so it's to his praise for us as his people to be a people who just trust him and to know that he's too wise to ever be mistaken with me and he's too good to ever be unkind and he's too mighty to ever have his good purposes for me thwarted or foiled

I can rest in that God I can submit I can wait but oh I need him I need him every hour I need these truths about him to ever be filling my mind well let's turn to a song that sets before us many good reasons for us to submit to him whatever my God ordains is right it's number 94 would you stand and sing it and even as we sing submit your trial to the Lord bow before his great providence of love and good in your life pray with me father what can we say but thank you thank you that as your children nothing can touch us but what you promise to work for our good our best thank you that you are faithful to all your promises you will fulfill your purpose for every one of us forgive us for our refusal to submit to your providences big and small in our lives teach us our rightful place as clay on the potter's wheel and such a potter with such a mighty hand and a nail pierced hand who loves us and is all wise and knows how to bring about good for us send us on our way rejoicing to belong to such a father to such a savior to have such a

Holy spirit in our hearts we pray in Jesus name Amen Amen