

The Way Up is Down

Humility and Submission to Christ

Contemporary culture is often described as the "era of self-assertion." We are encouraged to build our own brands, to seek the top of the pyramid, and to ensure our voice is the loudest in the room. However, in the Kingdom of God, the logic is inverted. The invitation of Jesus Christ is not to self-exaltation, but to **humility** and **submission**.

While the world views submission as weakness and humility as a lack of self-confidence, from a biblical perspective, these are the greatest demonstrations of spiritual strength and clarity of purpose.

The Essence of Humility: Decreasing so that He May Increase

John the Baptist captured the essence of the Christian life in a short phrase that is devastating to the human ego:

"He must increase, but I must decrease." (John 3:30)

John understood that his role was that of a precursor, someone who prepares the way. Humility is not thinking less of yourself (feeling inferior or incapable) but **thinking of yourself less**. It is the displacement of the "Self" from the center of the universe so that Christ may occupy the throne that is His by right.

When we empty ourselves of our own importance, we create space for God's grace to operate. As James 4:6 says, *"God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble"*. Pride acts as a shield that blocks divine help, while humility is the fertile soil where sanctification flourishes.

Submission as Liberation

Submitting to Christ is not a form of slavery, but true freedom. Human beings were created to be governed by God; when we attempt to govern ourselves, we become slaves to our own desires, fears, and instabilities.

Jesus invites us: *"Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls"* (Matthew 11:29).

The Master of the Orchestra

Imagine a talented violinist who decides he no longer wants to submit to the conductor's baton or follow the composed score. He decides to play his own melody, in his own time. The result is not creative freedom, but cacophony. He ruins the harmony of the orchestra and frustrates the purpose of the music. The true beauty of his talent is only revealed when he submits his technique to the conductor's vision. Likewise, our lives only achieve harmony when our wills align with the sovereign will of Christ.

The Supreme Example: The Emptying of Christ

The foundation for our humility is not human effort, but the imitation of Christ. In Philippians 2:5-8, Paul exhorts us to have the same mind that was in Jesus:

1. **He did not cling to His rights:** Being God, He did not consider equality with God something to be grasped.
2. **He emptied Himself:** Taking the form of a bondservant.
3. **He humbled Himself:** Becoming obedient to the point of death on a cross.

The submission of Jesus to the Father is what made the redemption of humanity possible. If the King of the Universe chose the path of obedience, how could we seek a different way?

The Practice of Submission in Daily Life

Submission to Christ manifests in three practical areas:

- **In the Mind:** Subjecting our thoughts and ideologies to the truth of God's Word.
- **In the Will:** Choosing what pleases God, even when our feelings suggest otherwise.
- **In Relationships:** Esteeming others as better than ourselves, serving without expecting recognition.

The Water and the Valley

Water always flows to the lowest places. It cannot rest on the peak of a steep mountain; it descends until it finds the valley, where it collects and generates life. So, it is with God's blessing. It does not linger on the peaks of human pride and self-sufficiency. God's grace flows down into the "valleys" of humility. If we want to be filled with His presence, we must be in the low place of submission.

Conclusion

Humility and submission are not destinations we arrive at once, but daily decisions. Each morning, we are confronted with the choice to reign over our own lives or hand the reins to Christ.

As we choose the path of John the Baptist and allow Jesus to increase, we discover a wonderful paradox: by "decreasing," we do not become nothing; on the contrary, we become everything we were created to be. Submission to Christ does not diminish us; it completes us.

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