

# **SUBMITTING TO AUTHORITY, The Way To Greatness!**

Kent A. Field © 9/86

## **OUR HISTORY**

The subject of authority, and being subject to authority, is a topic that a lot of people really don't like. In some parts of the world people find it easier to submit to authority than in others. In these locations and cultures, people certainly appear to be more submissive to authority than in some other cultures. You may wonder how the people in the Communist countries put up with it, how do their leaders get away with it? If you think about it, our country was founded really by a group of people that no longer wanted to submit to the king and to his authority. They didn't come here for greater economic potential; most of them came here because they didn't want to pay taxes. They didn't want to submit to authority. Some who came did come for new opportunity, and they were loyal to the king. They had no problem submitting to authority. But the early colonists were pretty divided. In fact, that is why, when the first colonies finally did unite, it wasn't to form one colony, but individual and independent states in order to keep their independence from authority. Their desire was to divide and form their own little entity. In fact, we are taught in school that this mind-set is good, and that is the way to do it...and then we wonder why our society as a whole has an increasingly hard time submitting to any authority.

In the religious setting, if somebody wants to break off and form their own little cell group, those of us who know the Bible know that this is wrong--it's condemned in the Bible. Except for the purposes of expansion, and growth, and mission work, the idea of breaking off because, "I don't want to submit to your authority", is condemned in the Bible. And yet, in great part, that is how and why our very country was formed in the first place.

## **IN THE BIBLE**

In Titus chapter 1 we have a generalization of an entire group of people, the Cretans. We make generalizations all the time about groups of people, and while generalizations can be true--like in the Cretans case--there are exceptions to these generalizations. But because there are exceptions, is it wrong to generalize? No! It is not wrong because God did it. Titus 1:10ff reads, "*For there are many rebellious men, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, who must be silenced because they are upsetting whole families, teaching things they should not teach for the sake of sordid gain. One of themselves, a prophet of their own said, Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons. This testimony is true. For this cause reprove them severely that they may be sound in the faith.*" It's interesting how Paul generalized that Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, and lazy gluttons and yet he also instructed Titus to appoint elders there. So obviously there were exceptions to this characterization. But my point is, general cultures of the world can and often do take on a certain character! You can observe this. "Long Islanders" tend to be an unsubmitive people.

## **OUR CULTURE**

You've heard the expression "respect your elders?" We don't teach that much anymore, partly for fear of being labeled a child abuser or other such thing...we almost can't teach that. We used to tell our kids "obey your elders"...and now we tell them "if anybody tells you to do anything, besides Mom or Dad, you tell them to go take a walk. Tell them you'll call a cop; ...tell them you'll sue them!!" And so these kids develop a problem with authority, unable to make a distinction between showing respect and falling into danger. Even worse, I see these things having their effect in the church - this problem with submitting to authority.

You will see in this study that there is definitely a problem with rejecting, resisting and despising authority. To arrogantly resist authority is wrong. You might think, "Authority? I submit to one authority, that's Christ Jesus. God is my authority." Well if He is, you won't resist the plain truths that I'm about to share with you. I hope the following passages will be helpful to you in relearning and understanding the principle and Biblical teaching of "Submitting to Authority."

### **THE SCRIPTURES**

1. **John 19:10-11** Jesus submitted to Pilate's authority. There is an interesting statement that Jesus makes here that we don't always pick up on. Jesus admits to Pilate, "yes, you have authority, it's been given to you from above." But because it's been given to him, does that mean it's not there anymore? No. In fact, when Pilate reminds Jesus of his authority, what does Jesus do? He answers him, which He didn't do before. Jesus submitted to Pilate's authority and verbally acknowledged it. So here you have Pilate, just a man, but he was given a position of authority from God, even to partake in Jesus' crucifixion. I'm not saying that Pilate is sinless in this matter, but his position of authority needed to be respected.
2. **Acts 23:1-5** Here is an example of Paul losing his temper in a situation before he was aware of all the facts. After being struck on the mouth, Paul says, "God is going to strike you, you white-washed wall!" Do you think Paul was a little mad? Verse 4 says, "But the bystanders said, "Do you revile God's high priest?" Now were they wrong in what they did, striking Paul on the face? Yes! But watch what Paul said in verse 5, "I was not aware, brethren, that he was a high priest; for it is written, 'You shall not speak evil of a ruler of your people.'" Paul submitted to the man's position, his authority! Obviously from the above verse, God is making a statement of how He feels about the rulers of the people--that they are to be respected, submitted to! We'll see that in other places in the New Testament as well.
3. **Romans 13:1-7** "Let every person be in subjection to the governing authorities. (And who was in power then? Nero! The Christian killer!) For there is no authority except from God; and those which exist are established by God. Therefore he who resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves." That tells me that every time we drive 56 mph or more on our highways and streets we are challenging the state legislatures, the policeman, and the judges who are in authority over us. And when we challenge that authority it says, verse 2, "that we oppose the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves." You will get a ticket! Refusing to obey authority is refusing to obey God!
4. **1 Peter 2:13-15** We need to be more willing to submit to authority, even to people in the world. Submit to our president, to governor's, "as the one in authority." The Bible says it is the right thing to do, providing those laws do not go against the will of God.
5. **Romans 1:28-32** There is a BIG problem with people being disobedient to these verses! Read over these verses. Do you fit into this list of people who, verse 32, "although they know the ordinance of God, practice such things..." the Bible says such things are worthy of death! Are any of us filled with deceit, malice, are there any gossips here? these people are listed here with "haters of God!" We need to learn to submit to authority.
6. **Hebrews 13:17** "Obey your leaders, and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls, as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be

unprofitable for you." So often new converts and young Christians after getting a few Bible studies under their belt begin to feel like "expert theologians" and fall into the sin of pride through a lack of submission. We can see this illustrated by looking at a group of children. How many children are qualified to perform brain surgery skillfully handling the scalpel? Of course they are not, there is a certain growth process that one has to go through to become a brain surgeon!! But give some children a knife and they feel they are expert brain surgeons and wouldn't hesitate to work on their little sister or brother. Of course~ the point is that we can see how foolish this is, and yet when we behave like that in our spiritual lives we don't see it. We don't see how foolish we are when we resist authority. Lets not fall into this sin of pride and become unsubmitive to the authority of our leaders in the church. When we are shown the Bible reason for doing things we need to obey it. When we are advised to move in a particular direction by an older brother or sister in Christ, we need to obey them.

7. **Hebrews 13:7** "Remember those who led you," (those are your leaders!) "who spoke the word of God to you; and considering the result of their conduct, imitate their faith." Not your faith, theirs! The older members of this congregation stand as an example to the younger members of this congregation, imitate their faith!
8. **Ephesians 5:21** If you are not submitting to one another, you are not submitting to Christ, and you don't fear Christ enough.
9. **1 Timothy 4:11** "Prescribe and keep commanding these things." Paul told Timothy, the evangelist, to command the congregation to do these things. A saved evangelist is going to keep on commanding these things and a saved person will keep on listening and obeying. Evangelists have this God-given authority. To resist the evangelist's authority then is to resist God's authority.
10. **Jude 5-9** Rejecting authority goes right back to the devil himself. *"But Michael the archangel. when he disputed with the devil and argued about the body of Moses did not dare pronounce against him a railing judgment. but said, "The Lord rebuke you."* Michael, the head angel, didn't even dare from his own authority to challenge the devil, simply because of the devil's position. He depended on God's authority to take care of Satan. Even the devil commanded respect from Michael, because of who he was. Do not the leaders of God's people deserve more respect? Are you going to submit to their authority? God said if you love man, then you love God; if you serve man, then you serve God. In just the same way, if you don't submit to man you do not submit to the authority of God. And it doesn't matter if you somehow feel a particular leader is unqualified. Notice how Michael did not dare bring a railing accusation against Satan.
11. **2 Peter 2:10** "And especially those who indulge the flesh in its corrupt desires and despise authority. daring, self-willed, they do not tremble when they revile angelic majesties. Whereas angels who are greater in might and power do not bring a reviling judgment against them before the Lord." You are daring and self-willed when you despise authority. Even the much more powerful angels did not bring judgment on the fallen angels - the demons! They know that even the demons were created by God at a high position, and God will take care of them. It's wrong to despise authority.

**The next page contains a more extensive study of the subject, but by no means exhaustive.**

## ATTITUDES OF SUBMITTING TO AUTHORITY & EXAMPLES

### The Way To Greatness In The Kingdom

By Kent Field ©1979

1. **James 4:6-10** - Mourning, weeping, and tears are an act of submission.
2. **Psalms 51:17** – God only wants a “broken” man! Only they are fit for service (worship).
3. **Luke 18:13,14** – Being exalted is used by Christ as the primary motivation for Humbling one’s self.
4. **Matt. 23:11-12** - If you want to be the greatest, be the servant of all.
5. **Mark 9:33** – If you want to be the first, make yourself the last.
6. **Mark 10:35-45** – Those who want to be first and the greatest among the church must become the servant of all.
7. **Matt. 18:1-4** – Jesus taught that to become the greatest in the Kingdom, you need to become like an innocent obedient child.
8. **Luke 14:7-11** – To receive the place of honor, one must first seek the lowest position. Then you can be exalted!
9. **John 13:3-17** – It was Peter’s lack of submission that caused him to rebuke Jesus and have to be corrected and rebuked by Christ. Then he learns his lesson of submission Jesus was trying to teach.
10. **2 Corinthians 11:7** – Preaching the Gospel without charge is an act of humbling one’s self.
11. **John 19:10-11** - Jesus submitted to Pilate's authority.
12. **Phil. 2:2-8** – Jesus humbles Himself by denying His access to His rightful power and position.
13. **Rom. 15:1-3** – We are to be like Christ, Who did NOT please Himself, but submitted.
14. **1 Cor. 10:33** – Paul sought to please all men in all things for their salvation, not for his profit.
15. **1 Cor. 9:19-22** – We are to become all things to ALL men so that we might save a few.
16. **Acts 10:1ff** – Captain Cornelius humbling himself to hear and obey the truth from strangers.
17. **Acts 17:11** – The Bereans demonstrated their humble submission by receiving the Word “with great eagerness”, not great suspicion!
18. **Acts 18:24-28** – The eloquent Apollos humbled himself to 2 strangers to learn the truth more completely, and truly be converted!
19. **Acts 23:1-5** - Paul submits to a man's position and apologizes to a non-believer.
20. **2 Sam. 11 & 12:1ff** – David submits to Nathan’s rebuke and God’s judgment.
21. **Gen. 4:1-12** – Cain refused to submit to God’s request for a kind of sacrifice.
22. **Exodus 3:4-4:18** – Humility in the Call of Moses! (**Nu.12:3** - Most humble man on earth!).
23. **Romans 13:1-7** - Let every person be in subjection to human authorities.
24. **1 Peter 2:13-15** - We need to be more willing to submit to authority, even to people in the world.
25. **1 Peter 3:1-5** – Women are to be in subjection to their men. (Greek translation) And show that subjection through their behavior and way they dress, being submissive.
26. **Romans 1:28-32** - We need to learn to submit to authority.
27. **Hebrews 13:17** – Obedience to leaders in the church, and submit to them for your soul.
28. **Hebrews 13:7** - Remember those who led you, submitting to, “imitating” their faith.
29. **1 Cor. 16:15,16** – The church is supposed to “be in subjection” to older Christians who have devoted themselves to the ministry.
30. **1 Peter 5:5,6** – Younger to submit to older and all to clothe with humility.
31. **Ephesians 5:21-33** - If you are not submitting to one another, then you are not submitting to Christ, and you don't fear Christ enough. (Wives & Husbands too).
32. **Colossians 3:18** – It is only fitting that women are to be subject to their men.
33. **1 Cor. 11:3** – Man is the head of (over) woman just as Christ is Head of Man.
34. **John 1:35-49; Mark 3:13,14; Mk. 2:14;1:16-22** – Jesus called the disciples who HE wanted, and they were expected to submit, leave everything, and follow Him in humble submission.
35. **Luke 9:57-62** – The call to follow IS the call to submit and subject one’s self to another’s teaching.

36. **1 Timothy 4:11** - Prescribe and keep commanding these things.
37. **2 Timothy 2:2** – Timothy was to seek out and disciple those who would submit and teach others.
38. **Acts 16:3** – Timothy submitted to the point of circumcision so he could reach others with the truth.
39. **Jude 1:5-9** - Rejecting authority goes right back to the devil himself.
40. **2 Peter 2:10** - You are daring and self-willed when you despise authority.