



## Christian Purpose!

by Mark Brunner

### *“In The Arms of God!”* (James 4: 1-6)

“Submit!” Not a word that many Americans value highly. We’re independent and submission to a foreign authority is out of the question and even submission to our own government is sometimes dubious. But, like everything, there is a time and a place for submission. The Bible asks this question, “What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don’t they come from your desires that battle within you? . . . Submit yourselves, then to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come near to God and he will come near to you.”

“Come near to God?” Does that mean that we are to boldly present ourselves to God and demand what is coming to us? Rather, the Bible is telling us to come near to the Father in submission. Approach God through His Son Jesus Christ. Stand in His presence in submission with a joyful heart. Submission to God leads to blessings—of this there is no doubt. When we come before our Father with thanksgiving and praise, He will hear our prayers and He will heal our lives. When we kneel at the altar and receive Holy Communion, we are practicing Christian submission. The Lord blesses us with His forgiveness. When we sit at the feet of our parents and listen to their words, we are practicing Christian submission. The Lord uses them to pour out His blessings upon us. When a wife submits out of love to her husband and a husband to his

wife, God's blessings descend upon them and their children. Parents remember that you are vessels of God's love and it is through you that he blesses your children and so you receive mutual blessings through one another. As we are not slaves to our God, but are declared free on account of Jesus, so we are not slaves to one another when we submit to one another. Rather, we are conquerors in this service and we take command of our lives. Children, submit to your parents and experience an outpouring of grace that can be gained nowhere else in this life. Realize that your parents are the closest thing to the Father you will experience on this earth. God channels His grace through them and longs for you to partake in it. It is yours for the taking. Simply submit and enter into a state of loving grace in the arms of your parent.

Remember, when we submit to one another out of love, not only will God bless us and bestow on us His richest grace, we will also put the devil to flight. Scriptures tell us, "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." Are you experience tumult in your life today? Could you use a break? Try "coming near to God" through worship, prayer and, yes, submission one to another. God longs to come near to us if only we would practice submission to Him through our worship and through our mutual submission. Come near to God this way, and he will come near to you.

*"Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own" (Matt 6:34)*

## *Connections!* (Ephesians 3:14-16)

Outside electrical boxes are a great convenience. I have several here at Beech Springs. My gutter heaters are plugged into outdoor boxes. But the box that is most critical is the box I put out next to the Blue Spruce tree at the corner of one of Holly's flower gardens. That's our seasonal, outside Christmas tree. Over seven sets of lights on two circuits plug into that box so running extension cords out to the tree just isn't practical. There's one thing about outdoor boxes though that can be a real problem. Moisture! The code for outdoor boxes is that the outlets have to have a trip circuit breaker to prevent the moisture from shorting out the electrical lines. A sensitive breaker might trip in a morning fog.

It seems that the switch I have installed would trip if you sneezed on it. It's a never-ending battle of man verses breaker when it comes to completing that particular outdoor circuit.

Even though I've run over a hundred feet of the best outdoor, underground wiring to that outlet, it doesn't matter how much current I push through the wire, if that breaker pops, everything stops. No connection, no lights.

Here's a story: Years ago an old Indian chief heard about the incredible power of electricity from the white men visiting his tribe. He wanted more than anything to experience this power for himself, but when he finally succeeded in moving to a place where housing with such power was available, he had no idea how to tap into it. Neighbors encouraged him to buy devices such as lamps, a radio and even an alarm clock; he purchased these items, but this only frustrated him because none of these seemed to work! As he sat in his dark, silent house, he was mystified as to why so many people boasted about electricity. How could something supposedly so useful be so totally useless? No one bothered to him that he needed to be connected to the power source, that he needed to plug the power cord into the electrical outlet! (Rob Chafert)

The same is true with God's Spirit, the "spiritual electricity" to anyone who believes. However, His power remains a mystery to anyone who doesn't connect himself to God by receiving His Spirit! The Apostle Paul refers to the power of the Holy Spirit with the Greek word "dun-á-mei." That's how we get our word, "dynamite." And just how powerful is God's "dynamite?" Beyond telling! Is it possible that, just like that Indian chief, we experience defeat because we don't know how to "be connected?" Like that outdoor electrical box, it only takes a minor problem in this life to trip our faith and shut us off from God. It IS a never-ending battle to stay connected. But, this is one battle we just can't afford to lose. No connection, no faith. No faith, no power? No power, no life. No life, no hope. Stay connected. It's worth the effort.

*“Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own” (Matt 6:34)*

## *Crammers of Crammers!* (Ephesians 3:14-21)

Crammers are the kind of people who find the biggest container possible into which they can put everything; just so they don't have two things to carry—even if that one thing would be bulkier than the smaller two things. It really doesn't matter. It is all in the perception of efficiency not convenience.

Crammers work on the principle that if the container says it has a capacity of “x” the manufacturer isn't telling you about the possibility of that little bit of “y” that was really designed into it in the first place. To a crammer every container has a potential that must be explored and a capacity that is begging to be tested.

Even though cramming is considered by some an art, to some it is mere foolishness. To wives and the sensible who inhabit our daily lives, cramming is self-defeating, even destructive. They've seen personally the collapsed and exploding boxes whose contents have pushed downward and cascaded out upon the floor. They know the damage that we crammers can do when our drive to stuff and manipulate space gets out-of-hand. What is the cause for such divergence of thinking when it comes to “packing?” Without a doubt it is that God has blessed some of us with good sense and others, like myself, with a sense of what could be good if only we had the space to make it so. And so it will go on until the “space” into which God has put us is ultimately reduced to nothing and we all share the same concept of space eternal in heaven.

Perhaps we crammers can take some solace in this, however. If God can put Christ, the Word by which all the heavens and the earth were made—whose very essence is so immense, so uncontainable that even the universe cannot hold Him, into our lowly and space deprived hearts, we have an example of packing that should inspire us for the rest of our lives. Just how does He do this? Even we crammers, who daily strive to make that “one more thing” fit into a space cowering in fear of our shoves and pushes, tremble in awe. That He who sits on the right hand of the Father is comfortably enthroned in our hearts, is a mystery beyond our understanding. Yet, therein He dwells in comfort among the appointments God has chosen for Him. And what makes all of this even more incredible is this. All of deep heaven dwells with- in the Son who dwells within us! We walk with the universe around us and within us.

Without a doubt, this is a packing problem that only God, the “Crammer of all crammers” could conquer. Praise be to God that He has chosen us to be the container into which He would do such wonderful “cramming.” He has not chosen to give us but part of the contents of Christ or even most of Him. He has chosen to give us ALL of Him.

*“Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own” (Matt 6:34)*

## *The Devine Handyman!* (Ephesians 3:17-19)

Sometimes we reach the limits of our patience and love and call it quits. I got there recently with a bathroom, remodeling job I was doing. Nothing went right for weeks and I finally “reached my limits.” I put pride on the shelf and decided that the direction I was going in was the wrong one. The project was fated to fail. I threw in the towel and called a handyman to install a shower surround. I had run out of patience, time and motivation. Where once my “do-it-yourself” nature had been the overpowering motivation; now I simply wanted to get the job done whether that meant my wallet was lighter or my manliness in getting the job done myself was brought into question. I had reached my limits and it was time to call in the experts.

But, what about God; does He ever run out of patience when it comes to finishing the work He starts in us? If he were to quit would there be a recourse?

Here’s a story: Once there was a father whose disobedient son had treated him with great hatred. The father in some way heard that the son was planning to kill him so that he might inherit the father’s fortune. The father went to his son and asked him to grant him one request: that he would come with him in the nighttime into a forest. The father led him into the depths of the forest, and then he told him what he had heard, and that he loved him so much that if he must kill him he would allow him to do it in such a way that he might not be forced to suffer the punishment for the crime. And taking out a sharp knife, he handed it to his son and told him that he was ready to die. The father’s merciful love so

touched the son with deep repentance that he fell sobbing to the ground and he became reconciled to his father and the love that had been denied for so long was born. (By J. Wilbur Chapan, "Present Day Parables.")

Are there limits to God's love? Will God ever reach the limits of his patience? The Bible tells us that "the length and depth" of this love "surpasses knowledge". God's love is total; reaching deeper than anything we know and stretching farther than anything that can be imagined. That love gives us every opportunity to reject Him, even giving us His life for ours and removing our punishment for the exchange. Consider how meaningless life would be if God ever decided that He had reached His limits and was pulling the plug on you and I. Thankfully, when it comes to finishing the work He started within us at baptism, God is the divine "handyman" who never quits until the whole job, difficult or not, is completely finished. Thank God that He's no quitter.

*"Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own" (Matt 6:34)*

## ***Hidden Blessing!*** (Ephesians 3:20-21)

You know what are the hardest things to find? I'm convinced that it's things right under our noses. Why is that? This really came home to me the other day as I was searching for a wood screw that I had purposely saved so that I could purchase the appropriate drill bit to fit just that screw. It was a hex head screw that required a hex head bit of a certain size. I set one of the screws aside when I broke the one good bit I had, thinking: "I'll just take this screw to the hardware store and match it to a bit." Two days later, when I found the time to go to the store, I began looking everywhere for that screw. It just couldn't be found. It had been the last one in the box, so there were no others to take its place. I looked and looked. Finally I decided to go to the hardware store and take my chances. I found a clerk and started to describe the screw as best I could, all the while him looking at a lump in my shirt pocket. "Like that one?" he stated quietly. I reached in and there it was; the first place I had thought of for safekeeping and the last place I would have looked to find it; right there, under my very nose.

Looking for happiness? Sometimes it's closer than you think. It may be a matter of just opening your eyes.

Here's a story: In the early years of the 1900s, a couple moved from North Carolina to Oklahoma. There they farmed a small piece of land. Truth be told, they lived mighty poorly for a good number of years. That all changed when a stranger drove up on their property and took a sample of their water. I'm not sure what he found, but it wasn't too much later that another stranger showed up and offered to buy their farm at an unbelievable price. Before long, a high-producing oil well was located between the house and the barn. Reminiscing, the old farmer said, "To think that we slaved here for all those years and all that time we had a fortune under our doorstep and we didn't know about it." (Source unknown)

Now, I'm not going to suggest we all ought to go out and dig in our backyard for oil. Life doesn't work that way – at least not very often. But I do suggest that the Lord, who gave His Son to save us, may have also given unrecognized fortunes to many of us. Looking for real happiness? Perhaps your unrecognized fortune is a spouse who has given faithfully without getting much in return. When it comes to our spouse and family, most of us have fortunes right outside our back doors or under our roofs. Keeping a domestic perspective has its advantages as well. Keeping our eye on what is truly worthwhile, spouse and family, will help us avoid losing things from under our own noses. Don't make your spouse and family the last stop in your search for happiness. Odds are, they've been in your pocket all along; you just had to look.

*“Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own” (Matt 6:34)*