

# **Family Bible Series for Nov. 27: Submission to the will of God is an imperative**

November 15, 2005

Posted: 11/15/05

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# **Submission to the will of God is an imperative**

- Job 42:1-17

**By Donald Raney**

*Westlake Chapel, Graham*

Few people find the idea of submission to be appealing. We willingly submit to the authority of the law and our employer to avoid repercussions, but most do not willingly submit to the will of another person. Often, even in the midst of physical or emotional suffering, many people stubbornly refuse to place themselves under the authority of someone else.

In times of significant struggles, some may even fail to submit their will to God's care and leadership. Yet it is precisely when we have submitted ourselves to God that he can most clearly reveal himself and his will to us. It only is when we have surrendered our plans and perspectives to God that we are open to accept God's instruction.





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Few people in the Bible learned this lesson more clearly than Job. After all of the speeches by his friends and Job's own repeated declaration of innocence before God, Job ultimately comes to realize that when life caves in, the best plan is to continue to submit to and honor the sovereign Creator.

### **Job 42:1-6**

For the first 37 chapters of Job, God's voice is not heard outside the heavenly assembly. God patiently allows the speeches of Job and his friends to continue until Job boldly calls on God to answer for the way Job has been treated. Out of his growing frustration, Job challenges God's sense of justice.

God answers in chapters 38-41. In those chapters, God clearly asserts his unique place as the Creator by outlining his power, knowledge and sovereignty over all of creation. The tone of God's words in these chapters does not appear to be that of a reprimand of Job. Yet God clearly wants to remind Job of his position in relation to that of God.

It also should be noted that in these chapters God does not give Job an answer to his question of why he has suffered. He merely reminds Job that God is in possession of knowledge far surpassing all Job could dream of and that he exercises that knowledge in sovereignty over creation. Chapter 42

then represents Job's response to God's revelation.

God's words appear to have had the desired effect. Job's tone in chapter 42 clearly had changed from one demanding answers to one of humble submission to the power of God. He has been reminded of the gulf that lies between his knowledge and that of God.

In verse 3, he admits he had spoken of things that he did not understand. He then goes on to state that, since he now understands, he repents. Job is not repenting here of some great earlier sin that had led to his suffering as his friends had suggested. Instead he is repenting of the presumptuous attitude and accusation he made concerning God's justice. While he will continue to bring his questions to God, Job now understands he is in no position to accuse God.

### **Job 42:7-9**

Having heard Job's response, God turns to address the three friends who had given Job advice. God clearly is displeased with the way they had spoken to Job. Twice God affirms they had not spoken the truth in offering their opinions. All suffering is not due to punishment for sin on the part of the one suffering. These men had not consulted God before offering their explanations of Job's pain.

Job is shown to have been more righteous in his words than his friends by the repeated phrase "my servant Job." These friends should thus repent and offer sacrifices to God. They will further benefit as the righteous Job intercedes for them. This is another way in which Job is honored by God. Having committed his own life to God, Job is in a position to offer genuine prayers for God to show mercy to his friends.

Intercessory prayer is indeed a powerful tool which God grants to all

believers. It not only is effective in the life of the one being prayed for, but also affects the life of the one praying by strengthening his or her commitment to God and keeping his or her focus on the needs of others.

### **Job 42:10-17**

The book of Job concludes with the happiest of endings. God returns to Job all he had lost and more. His health is restored, he becomes financially prosperous again and he regains a large family. While it appears Job certainly was rewarded for remaining faithful to God, we must be very careful how we handle and apply the end of this story.

God is not promising to reward financially or otherwise all believers in this life. Indeed such a claim would contradict the primary message of the book. Just as suffering is not a sign of punishment for disobedience, prosperity is not a sign of blessing for obedience.

Job tells us we cannot break God's thoughts and acts down into a simplistic equation that mandates certain actions by God. God's ways are much higher than ours. While God does want us to bring our questions to him, he alone ultimately holds the answers and determines when to reveal them. Our task is to remain faithfully submitted to God and enjoy whatever blessings God sends.

### **Discussion questions**

- What are some of the ways that we can maintain our submission to God?
- When was the last time you personally experienced the results of intercessory prayer?

- If you could have any one question answered by God what would it be?

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