

Submission by Design

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When I first began to write this paper, I was in spiritual and literal turmoil. My husband had become excessively violent and I had been forced to seek help. Emotionally, I was done, finished, spent, incapable of submitting to the insanity even one more day.

The reason I was still there after all that had happened over so many years was because I thought I didn't have a choice. I didn't know there was a line. If I was going to honor and obey God, I thought I had to submit to anything that was thrown at me. If you knew all that is covered up and encouraged by the term submission, you would be amazed and probably devastated at the misuse of God's Word. This submission to sin stripped away my hope and left me lonely, broken, and bitter.

Anyway, I thought I was being obedient to the Word of God, even though it seemed to make the situation worse. At church, a few remarks were made about my circumstances that seemed to be the precursor for yet another lesson on the role of a submissive wife.

I spoke of my concerns to my counselor at church. She asked if I had ever written about my feelings regarding submission. I said, "Not exactly, here is what I have written." I then read to her the deepest burdens of my heart from my journal. She paused and then asked if I would write about submission.

That is how I started this journey, and this paper is where God has led me. I didn't have a purpose when I began other than to pour out all the ponderings and prayers I had made for years. Yet God began to expose His Word and His will to me in an utterly new light. My focus began to change from seeking to be a godly wife to seeking God's will.

What thrilled me even more was to realize the answer was in the Word of God, not just to my pain but to so many others caught or trapped because they had been restricted to one part of God's Word. You see, God did not limit me to one truth the day I said my marriage vows. He wrote every word for me and all I had to do was dig deep into His wonderful wisdom and find Him and all that He loves.

Right now many women are taught that if they will just submit, serve, and love more, this will make their husbands love them. I must emphasize that I absolutely agree that I am called to submit, serve, and love. Yet my submission is not capable of changing my husband's heart. That is a job the Holy Spirit has reserved for Himself.

Also, I think we have it backwards. The church did not submit to Christ, serve Christ, and love Christ to initiate Christ's love for her. Instead, He loved and died for her while she was dead in her sins. The church, brought to life by this great love, responded in love, service, and submission to Christ. Christ is the initiator; His bride, the responder. The same is true in marriage.

While I certainly speak forthrightly in this piece, it is by no means intended to offend, but rather to tell the truth and direct the hearts of His people to Him, His Word, and to all that He loves. You see, I also want to see God's covenant of marriage restored, and I want to see Christ's bride, beautiful and righteous, standing bright like a city on a hill, beckoning to His world.

Yet, if there is to be cultural change regarding marriage and divorce, then it must begin His way by defending what He loves and what He died for—me, the bride, the one made in His image.

The way to do that is to seek truth, spoken in love, followed by justice, while always loving mercy. Only then will righteousness follow.

—Anonymous

For our God who sees all, even the sparrows who fall.

The kids' toy at Chick Fillet this week was the Harriet Tubman cassette tape. I played it in the car for the kids, but it was I who was moved nearly to tears, but mostly to resolution.

You could hear the crack of the whip and feel the hot tears and anger that fell with the injustice and cruelty she experienced. You understood her determination and conviction that "God gave me the right to be free or to die tryin'."

You rejoiced at her escape and marveled at her courage to rescue her family and others. You could plainly see God's hand leading the modern Moses.

When I listened to the remarkable details of how God provided and protected her missions, I was left with one undeniable fact—God wanted her to be free! And not just her, but her family and others as well, just like He wanted His people free from Pharaoh's hand; just like He wants the sex slaves free in Southeast Asia; just like He wants battered women released from their silent oppression.

I must confess I felt odd writing about submission. I know what it should look like. I have heard it from the pulpit, read about it in books, been wisely instructed on it, and seen it in others' homes.

One dear friend commented she had no problem with the idea of submission because her husband did such a good job making her feel loved and honored. I was in awe of what she said. It sounded so beautiful, yet I was hurt that my own marriage was so completely one-sided.

The love and honor I gave my husband was repaid with anger, cruelty, selfishness, and violence. Ideally, I thought, there should be a mutual love, respect, care, and dedication between two individuals joined into one covenant relationship, where each are equal in worth but different in duty and authority. The husband takes the role as the servant leader and the wife takes the role of helper, lover, and friend—willing to contribute, support or even follow as situations arise.

However, it does not matter what submission is *supposed* to look like or how a husband *should* treat his wife if that is *not* the reality. After hearing a few details of how my marriage worked, my father exclaimed that was just not how a marriage was supposed to function—to which I replied that it didn't matter how things should be because that was just not the way things were, and I had no right, no power, and no authority to change anything.

However pathetic or ridiculous that may sound, it was the down to earth truth. I am reminded of the reaction to Amy Carmichael's *Things as They Are*, a frighteningly accurate account of the situation in India. The people of England scoffed, "Things can't really be that bad. Why would you write such things?" Her response— "Because it's true!"

For example, we in the United States proclaim that every human has "certain unalienable rights endowed to them by their Creator, and among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." (Interestingly, Jefferson's original draft dubbed these rights as life, liberty and "property", which was omitted for a more illusive "pursuit of happiness.") We charge other nations with violations of these rights, and yet their oppression goes on mercilessly. Why? It is such a simple concept. Unless someone in authority acknowledges and gives the people these rights, or some with courage, strength, and conviction fights for these rights, they are just empty words that leave hearts and souls shriveled and without hope.

The same is true in marriage. I have heard it said that marriage halves your rights and doubles your duties. But I know there are marriages where a wife's rights are stripped and her duties are made into burdens, leaving her heart defrauded of any love or kindness, her body aching for tenderness or a gentle touch, and her spirit longing for peace and freedom from fear.

I know this because I have been this woman for eight years. For eight years, I prayed for God to be enough, for grace to be sufficient, for me to be content with His love and Him alone.

While I would love for you to think these prayers were motivated only out of a love for my Lord, in truth they were a cry for help, hope, and love in a desperately bad marriage where the abuse of my husband only grew stronger, bolder, and invaded new territory.

There would usually be a few glimpses of hope after an incident, but even they vanished after a while, and he would act as if nothing had happened . . . and I had better act that way too. Unthinkable, you say! No . . . common!

But what right does a wife have when her body and spirit are not her own, and she is not allowed the privilege of having feelings? Is she to give everything and expect nothing while enduring cruelty and hate?

When I searched the scriptures for direction, all I found was duty, not rights—duty to forgive, submit, suffer, turn the other cheek, be kind, and love despite the circumstances, the number of offenses, or even the individual involved because this is what Christ did for us.

How could I ignore the clear directives of Ephesians 5:1-2, 1 Timothy 1:16, Philippians 2:1-16, 1 Corinthians 7:1-16, Luke 6:27-31, Matthew 5:43-48, Romans 12:14, 1 Peter 2 & 3, and the 13th chapter of John?

It seems clear that God Himself abdicated all His glory and rights when He humbled Himself and came in the likeness of man, served, suffered, loved, and died. If Christ humbled Himself to death, what right or reason do I have to claim any rights when I am a recipient of His very grace by His very death?

I read and prayed all these familiar passages in God's Word and begged for grace to live them. My own love was insufficient in the face of such day-to-day cruelty and selfishness. It was clearly obvious my only value to my husband was to keep house, raise his children, and be the recipient of any frustration he might be feeling. I guess the reason I found submitting so hard was because of what I had to submit to.

I would give you some gut wrenching examples, but I prefer not to. Call it pride or maybe my last shred of dignity, but if you need to understand just how bad it can get, there are many stories out there.

Anyway, it is not that I did not know how to submit. My childhood had trained me well. The best way to avoid the abuse was to keep a low profile, say nothing, zone out during a rage, and make sure everything was as perfect as possible. I am aware of how all this sounds, but my goal was never perfection; at best it was peace at all costs.

I sincerely wanted to be a faithful disciple and godly wife and mother. Yet my efforts seemed so fruitless. I thought maybe this was my mission field, my chance to die again and again to self, to be broken bread and poured out wine, to spend and be spent.

There is a passage by Oswald Chambers that seemed to settle the matter for me. "It is one thing to go on the lonely way with dignified heroism, but quite another thing if the line mapped out for you by God means being a doormat under other people's feet. Suppose God wants to teach you to say, 'I know how to be abased'—are you ready to be offered up like that? Are you ready to be not so much as a drop in the bucket, to be so hopelessly insignificant that you are never thought of again in connection with the life you served? Are you willing to spend and be spent, not seeking to be ministered unto but to minister? Some saints cannot do menial work and remain saints because it is beneath their dignity."

So I submitted and served and gave and loved, all for Him.

John Piper's quote, "God is most glorified when we are most satisfied in Him and Him alone" was another thought that kept me going. But I waned and grew tired of the nastiness. By that time, I was frustrated with myself.

Why can't I just be content with the cup God has given me? How dare I expect more than grace? Isn't that an insult to my Savior?

I felt wronged and guilty simultaneously. I heard it perfectly verbalized in this statement: "I don't deserve any better than what my husband is giving because I'm not perfect either, and I owe it to God to keep loving him into loving me." After all, love suffers long and love never fails. If I would just submit more or serve more, then he would be kind. Surely there must be something I can do to change the way he treats me. Why can't I just stop caring how I am treated?

So I prayed again and again, and begged God to change me and make me more loving, submissive, serving, and humble.

Now I know love is giving someone what they need and not what they want, and certainly love includes truth. But how can someone in the role of submitting, respecting, honoring, and serving expose a truth that would be considered disloyal, dishonoring, and disrespectful?

The consequences of the truth are very high and very risky. "*Justice is turned back, and righteousness stands afar off; for truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter. So truth fails, and he who departs from evil makes himself a prey.*" Isaiah 59:14-15

What seems so overwhelming about the whole situation is the helplessness of it all. Once a woman realizes nothing she does will change the way she is treated, she begins to lose hope and die inside, especially when the only end to the cruelty seems to be her death or her husband's.

She sees only decades of cruelty to hope for, and her life seems stripped of joy, love, and kindness. Because she is married to her oppressor, she must suffer silently. She becomes bitter, cold, and resentful watching the years pass.

She has no desire to touch or be touched. The promises of God seem meant for someone else and she begins to doubt if God ever loved her, and if these are *"the plans He has for her, plans for peace and not evil, to give her a hope and a future."* Jeremiah 29:11

She can find no recourse. Her prayers seem to be unheard, and the church preaches submission and no divorce. She tries to get guidance from older and wiser women without violating the sacred code of silence regarding marriage.

Without hesitation, she is told that no matter what the issue, she is required by God to submit with a smile on her face, serving hands, and open legs. No wonder she feels like a hated thing. She just wants to hurry up and die so she can be with the only One who truly loves her. I remember thinking the same thing Harriet Tubman's father said to her, "We'll be free together in heaven."

While God certainly promises freedom in heaven, He does not think highly of oppression on earth in any form. In fact, scripture is filled with warnings and indictments against oppressors and charges for His people to root out injustice, end oppression, and to show mercy (Isaiah 58:6-10).

Some use the scripture in 1 Peter 3 to suggest that wives should submit silently to anything. However, the cross was not an act of submitting to wickedness and sin, but submitting to the will of God. The cross was the ultimate act of truth and love, fulfilling justice, righteousness, and mercy. Christ did not cover up sin, submit to sin, or respect sin. He did not pretend the sin wasn't there or make excuses for the sin. Instead, through the cross, He became the redeemer and deliverer of the very sin He paid for with His life.

I realize, of course, that the church is trying to reclaim the role of a godly wife in response to a century of feminism that has wreaked havoc on our culture. Yet if you look to the roots of feminism, these women had something very different in mind than what has occurred. The majority of suffragists had another goal—temperance, the absence of the angry drunk, or rather peaceful, prosperous, loving homes. They were not power hungry feminists, but women who felt something must be done about the saloons and pubs where men would drink away the children's food and clothes, and return home only to inflict their drunken anger on wives and children.

Why did the suffrage movement happen then and not at other periods of history? Personally, I believe it was in response to a situation made desperate by the industrial revolution and westward expansion. But whatever the social and economic reasons for the problem, the cry was against the ugly reality in many families.

They desired women and children to be free from the fear and oppression found in their homes. Neither men, nor state, nor church made much of an attempt to rescue the women from their harsh reality, but instead lauded each other on proper roles, the authority of man, and the necessity of man to rule his roost and keep his woman in her place. However, the suffragists mistakenly identified the pub as the problem, and since men would never vote their own pleasure-seeking away, women sought to insert her voice, or vote, into the public arena. If man would not save himself, then woman would save him whether he wanted to be saved or not.

While her motive was sound, the suffragist was wrong in theory and action.

The reason the Great Experiment failed was because beer was not the root of all the evil they saw—sin was and still is. And just as drink was not the problem, the problem was also not with all men, but all men bore the sacrifice to the suffrage/temperance movement.

The problem the suffragists failed to deal with was sin—selfish, angry, violent, cruel, oppressive sin from the one with all the authority. They reasoned that by removing woman from under the authority of man, and drink from man, decency and dignity would prevail, and hopefully peace and prosperity.

Modern feminists seek equality by attempting to blend the sexes and by destroying the true, God-given attributes of women. Their motive is not nearly so noble, as it is overwhelmingly political in nature. Yet equality with man should never have been the goal because man and woman are inherently different—needing and desiring very different things. They do, however, share in one singular purpose, their chief end—the glory of their Maker, Lord and Savior.

G. K. Chesterton begins his book, *What's Wrong with the World*, with a theological discussion of the chicken and egg. His conclusion is that the only purpose of the egg is to produce a chicken, whereas the chicken can lay eggs, amuse herself, inspire painters, squawk incessantly, or even praise God.

So we are not only procreators, but creatures bearing His image. We are not only products of the fall, but knit, chosen, and redeemed by our Father as well. The life we live has purpose and dignity and worth because God Himself died for us.

"The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God who died and gave Himself up for me."
Galatians 2:20

Yet many men treat their wives in such a way as to remove any hope of dignity or love. These women become diligent ants, scurrying to manage and repair all the angry footprints their husbands leave trying to squash them or keep them in their place. They cannot even begin to heal or deal with the damage to their spirit because they must prevent the next outburst if possible, or accept the mess as their fault. After all, "they are the one with the problem."

This environment leaves entire families scarred and shattered. The damage done to the children is extensive and is often passed down to the next generation for another lifetime of hopelessness and despair. So wouldn't the dignity of godly womanhood, the future of children and entire families, justice, liberty, and the glory of our God be better served by destroying this tyranny rather than destroying these women by ignoring their plight?

Now I have been taught ever since I was a little girl that grace is sufficient, that the only thing I need is Jesus. So I sat in my misery, trying to be content and grateful and silent, holding out for when I would meet my Savior and enter His everlasting grace.

"I will wait upon the Lord. My flesh and my heart fail; but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever."
Psalm 73:26

"The Lord is my portion, says my soul. Therefore, I hope in Him! The Lord is good to those who wait for Him, to the soul who seeks Him. It is good that one should hope and wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord. It is good for a man to bear the yoke in his youth. Let him sit alone and keep silent because God has laid it on him; let him put his mouth in the dust—there may yet be hope. Let him give his cheek to the one who strikes him and be full of reproach. For the Lord will not cast off forever. Though He causes grief, yet He will show compassion according to the multitude of His mercies. For He does not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men." Lamentations 3:24-33

I used to say to myself, "Well, if he does it again, then I'll do something." I'm embarrassed by how many times I said that statement. I remember the day I asked myself a different question, "Why won't I leave or at least say something?"

Essentially, there were two reasons: pride and fear. But I also clung to the idea that I was being godly, that a submissive wife keeps silent just as Christ did, thereby glorifying the Father.

I also hoped my silence and submission to all he did and said would somehow open his heart so that he would love me. It didn't.

What did work was truth, and the truth most certainly did set me free. How? By the power of our Lord. *"For our Lord Christ has surnamed Himself Truth, not custom."* (Tertullian)

Deitrich Bonhoeffer, hung for resisting the Nazis said, *"We cannot follow Christ unless we live in revealed truth before God and man."*

"They solace themselves that the enemy will be merciful. It is the madness of folly, to expect mercy from those who have refused to do justice." said Thomas Paine.

The power of truth is astonishing. Not only did truth release me to deal with the sin and oppression in our family, it released my husband from hate and anger. It released me from resentment and, most importantly, from having such a small view of God's amazing grace.

The word *sufficient* has the connotation in our culture of "just enough." Yet that does not even begin to describe grace. *For enough* is as good as a feast (old proverb) and *enough* is an abundance to the wise (Euripades).

I saw that His grace is not stingy; it is abundant! His grace is not meant for heaven only, but for this life we live through Him, as well. His grace is not meant for a stale and stagnant life, but for a life of feasting on the wonderful riches of His grace. But what does all this talk of God's grace mean to someone oppressed by sin?

It means because His grace is so sufficient, so divine, so abundant, that I have a duty to fight and live for Him and His kingdom, to show others how much He loves truth, justice, mercy, and righteousness by breaking the yoke of affliction and showing His compassion which fails not.

I have the duty and privilege of telling how Christ died so we might know abundant life is found in Him and through the cross which stands for all that God loves. But I also have a duty to live it. *"Always preach the gospel, and when necessary use words."* St. Francis of Assisi.

It's hard to know what to do when you are in the middle of oppression with an angry foot in your face. One thing is certain, though--God does not call us to do nothing.

In 1776, a few brave patriots who saw the oppression of the British Empire clearly and boldly confronted the evil they saw, declaring they would not submit to wickedness. They lost much because tyranny does not fall easily. Thomas Paine wrote, "Tyranny, like hell, is not easily conquered; yet we have this consolation with us that the harder the conflict, the more glorious the triumph. Throw not the burden of the day upon Providence, but 'show your faith by your works' that God may bless you."

Martin Luther stood against the tyranny and deceit of the church and it cost him dearly. Martin Luther King, Jr. dared to dream for an America free from hate and prejudice; it cost him his life. Harriet Tubman dared to flee oppression and risked her own life time and time again to rescue others.

There were people who acted upon the truth of the gospel, that God came to free His people so they might know His wonderful works and the goodness of His love. Saint after saint has died defending and clinging to truth. If they had been silent, done nothing, and submitted to the sin and to the lie, their lives would have been spared. But they chose to do and say something, that only something which could truly free them—truth. They chose the hard road of truth with all its persecutions so they would triumph in freedom and life.

In my own case, I had come to the sad conclusion that because of my circumstances I would never, could never tell the truth about what was going on behind closed doors. What I failed to see is that I was standing in the way of truth and peace and hope. My silence enabled my husband's sin to thrive.

That was when God said ENOUGH! He put my children in safe hands so I could not worry about them and stay for their sake. He left me with no home to retreat to and no money to hide away quietly in a motel while the storm passed.

He forced me to swallow pride and fear and tell the truth to friends and turn to the church for help. He did not want me to spend one more day on the road to hopelessness and bitterness; nor did He want my husband under the control of rage and hate any longer. He wanted us both free.

He does not want the bride, the symbol of the church, to be oppressed one more day, nor does He want husbands, symbolic of Him, to have epitaphs that read, "Dead, but not forgiven," because of a life of cruelty.

He wants His people free, free from fear, free from sin, free to speak truth, free to live, free to love, free to give, free to serve, free to feast on the wonderful riches of His boundless grace.

Freedom is paramount to truth, for it is only in truth that freedom can be found. As the song writer says, "All her sins were cast on Me, and she must and shall go free." So why are freedom and truth so important to God? Is it because freedom's price was so high—the life and death of His Son, Truth, that He does not want to see it squandered or squashed.

I think this must be why He rejoices to set the oppressed free so they might taste a little of heaven's goodness on earth. As Harriet Tubman told her father who resisted being set free, "God has a different plan." He wanted them to see His goodness and His wonderful works.

When I see all the problems and injustices in the world, it all seems so overwhelming. It's hard to know where to begin. Why should my suffering and oppression matter to anyone? Why should it matter to the church? Should I concern myself with justice or am I called to administer mercy by continuing to turn cheek after cheek, literally? Which brings God glory? Which is seeking after Christ?

Eventually, it comes down to Him, that the most important use of my life is living the gospel of Jesus. But what does that mean? *“Abide in me.”* But how do I abide in Jesus? By sitting at His feet, listening to His word with a heart willing to obey.

Obey what? His revealed will in His infallible Word. What does His Word say? *“Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.”* Matt. 6:33

How do I seek His kingdom and His righteousness? *“Prepare ye the way of the Lord, prepare ye the way for the kingdom.”* Mark 1:3

How do I prepare the way? *“But to do justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with thy God.”* Micah 6:8

What is His way, what is His righteousness, what is His justice, what does His kingdom look like? James says real religion is helping orphans and widows and keeping oneself clean.

Is this not the fast I have chosen to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, to let the oppressed go free and that you break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and that you bring to your house the poor who are cast out; when you see the naked, that you cover him, and not hide yourself from your own flesh? Then your light shall break forth like the morning, your healing shall spring forth speedily, and your righteousness shall go before you; the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard. Then you shall call and the Lord will answer; you shall cry and the Lord will say, ‘Here I am.’ If you take away the yoke from your midst, the pointing of the finger and speaking wickedness, if you extend your soul to the hungry and satisfy the afflicted soul, then your light shall dawn in the darkness and your darkness will be as the noonday.” Isaiah 58:6-10

Apparently, God thinks standing up for what is right and not blindly submitting to sin and wickedness is essential to kingdom building, to righteousness, to following Christ, and to freedom and truth. *“Let justice roll on like a river and righteousness like a never-failing stream.”* Amos 5:24

Where power and authority are abused and control is unrighteous, unjust and unchecked, liberty, peace, and justice vanish, particularly when the oppressed are instructed to submit silently in the name of their Savior.

“No one calls for justice, nor does any plead for truth. They trust in empty words and speak lies . . . Therefore, justice is far from us nor does righteousness overtake us.” Isa. 59:4, 9

The reason the oppression and abuse in the home is so destructive is twofold. One is because it entraps another generation to the heartache and patterns of oppression, whether victim or abuser. The second is because it is home, the place where you lay your head and eat your food, a place that should be a haven, but is filled with hate and fear.

For example, it is much easier to suffer under an oppressive regime if there are loving hearts and hands at home to ease the burden, to encourage, and to share compassion. But when home is horrible, it leaves women feeling helpless and hated, and despair takes root.

Abuse in the home also has a horrible social stigma to bear if one ever dares to tell. So pride aids in the silence.

Another important facet that creates an enormous burden on women is sex with their abuser. I remember calling out to God, “I know you want me to love my enemy, but why do I have to sleep with him?” Because of the intimacy of sex, it creates a much deeper wound. *“For it is not an enemy who reproaches me; then I could bear it. But it was you, a man my equal, my companion and my acquaintance. We took sweet counsel together and walked to the house of God in the throng. He has put forth his hands against those who were at peace with him; he has broken his covenant.”* Psalm 55:12-14, 20

I remember after a night of abuse, retreating to get breakfast with some friends. The conversation turned to marriage and one friend began saying how important sex was in re-establishing intimacy after a disagreement, and for the first time I didn’t keep silent. Maybe it was because I was still so raw, but the words quickly spilled out of my mouth. I said, “Do you know what it feels like to have sex with someone who is constantly cruel to you? It feels like they are peeing on you.” That was pretty much the end of breakfast. No one said much, but then they prayed and prayed. A week later the dam broke, and yes, I will stake my life on the power of Truth.

In the church, women are taught submission and silence are required of a Christian wife (some from the pulpit, but mostly from other women). Home is hateful, yet the church says stay at home. And I have to ask, “Why?” Why is the rest of scripture, the wisdom of God, not for me as well? If I am going to seek Truth Himself and His kingdom and His righteousness and all that it stands for, then I will no longer be bound to one truth, but will bask in the full power of the Word of God which has no limits and no lack of wisdom, mercy, and love.

Following the verses in Lamentations 3 (quoted previously), is another verse written by God for me as well: *“To crush under one’s feet all the prisoners of the earth, to turn aside the justice due a man before the face of the Most High, or subvert a man in his cause, the Lord does not approve.”*

Now I am no mathematician. I only have experience from which to speak. But if every 9 seconds in America a woman is abused, and the world considers this a serious social problem with far reaching effects, and the rate of divorce among evangelical Christians is higher than the rest of the nation, doesn’t it stand to reason that maybe a substantial number of those cases are in the church, in the body of Christ? Maybe we don’t hear about them because they are not here.

Maybe we don’t hear about them because they are dismissed as marital problems, or maybe women feel they are not free to speak the truth. Because of this blanket of submission, the sin goes on and grows until she can’t stand one more day wasted in this madness.

I must ask, *“Isn’t this what Satan would want, to encourage submission to sin and covering for sin, managing sin and excusing sin so hate, violence, doubt, despair and bitterness would thrive, thereby making the righteousness of the bride of Christ impossible?”*

Aren’t we to encourage each other to love and good deeds? How can this happen with such monumental sin controlling our homes? This is a crucial task for the church. Just as Old Testament high priests cleansed themselves outwardly and inwardly before entering the Holy of Holies, so we must take the power of the cross, Truth, and cleanse His bride.

Why now? *“If there must be trouble, let it be in my day that my child may have peace, and this single reflection well applied is sufficient to wake every man to duty.”* (Thomas Paine)

There is a great song out right now (recorded by Casting Crowns) that clearly states the mission of His church. *“If we are the body, why aren’t His arms reaching; why aren’t His hands healing; why aren’t His words teaching? If we are the body, why aren’t His feet going; why is His love not showing them He is the Way. He is the way.”*

Of course there are risks, big, messy risks and strong, smelly sin. However, we cannot fear bad reports if they are true, or turn from hurting people because they bleed.

“He who justifies the wicked, and he who condemns the just, both of them are like an abomination to the Lord. It is not good to show partiality to the wicked, or overthrow the righteous in judgment.” Proverbs 17:15; 18:5.

We must do His work regardless of the cost, as Janani Luwum, shot for defying the cruelties in Uganda said, *“Whenever I have the opportunity I have told the president the things the church disapproves of. God is my witness.”*

And as Mother Theresa said, *“God does not ask us to be successful, just faithful.”* Or better yet, as G. K. Chesterton said so audaciously, *“If a thing is worth being done, it is worth being done badly.”*

The church must seek His righteousness which will not be found without Truth, and cannot be attained apart from justice, for these are crucial to His kingdom. *“By perseverance and fortitude we have the prospect of a glorious issue, by cowardice and submission the sad choice of a variety of evils,”* said Thomas Paine.

What will the world think if the church stands up for righteousness and protects the oppressed of her own flock? *“Bear one another’s burdens.”* (Galatians 6:2)

What will the world think if we not only reveal our sin, but deal with and heal our sin with His redeeming, unfailing love?

What if we, the bride of Christ, could be that place where people find out in very real life terms *“Come unto me all who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.”* (Matthew 11:28)

The church and the elders, responsible to God, must give women permission to speak truth and be a haven of safety and compassion for the ensuing whirlwind it will stir up. *“Prepare the way; remove the stumbling block out of the way of my people.”* (Isaiah 57:14b)

If we are strong and courageous enough to take on pornography, let us be strong enough to take on oppression in our midst and stop sin! As Christ said, *“Go, and sin no more,”* for it is He who leads and guides us.

The church has even further instruction in Hebrews 12:12-15: *“Therefore strengthen the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees, and make straight paths for your feet so that what is lame may not be dislocated, but rather be healed. Pursue peace with all people and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord, looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled.”*

I have heard from every person with a soapbox that *“the biggest threat to national security is the unraveling of the family.”* I agree, but would take it even further—the unraveling of the family is a threat to Christ’s bride which He bought with His life. If this is true, wouldn’t women, children, families, the body of Christ, justice, mercy, and liberty be better served, and ultimately saved, by destroying this tyranny rather than destroying the women by ignoring their plight. Because that is exactly what submission to sin does—sweeps the tyranny under the rug until she suffocates from the stench.

So if the future of the church, the family, and the child must be saved, so must the woman be saved from her present oppression. If the woman is to be saved from her present tyranny, then the tyranny must be revealed. If the tyranny must be revealed, then it must be brought down.

If the tyranny is to be brought down, then justice must prevail. If justice must prevail, then it must be the justice of the Lord. If the justice of the Lord is required, then it must be the church who fights for it.

If it must be the church who fights for the justice of the Lord, it must be through His power, His wisdom, His Spirit, and through Him, Truth.

For it is He who died for her and it is His image she bears. *“She is the human and sacred image; all around her the social fabric shall sway and split and fall; the pillars of society shall be shaken, and the roofs of ages come rushing down; and not one hair of her head shall be harmed.”* (G. K. Chesterton)

I realize no one wants to open up and see how far the cancer has spread, but we are called to pursue His kingdom and His righteousness.

With the Holy Spirit to guide, we can walk this path. The result will be this: *“Mercy and truth have met together; righteousness and peace have kissed. Truth shall spring out of the earth, and righteousness shall look down from heaven. Yes, the Lord will give what is good, and our land will yield its increase. Righteousness will go before Him and shall make His footsteps our pathway.”* (Psalm 85:10-13)

For the day has come.

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor. He has sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn, to console those who mourn in Zion, to give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness, that they may be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He may be glorified.”

(Isaiah 61:1-3)

—Anonymous

More on Submission

Excerpt from *Boundaries in Marriage* by Dr. Henry Cloud & Dr. John Townsend:

“Husbands have used the apostle Paul’s teaching (Eph. 5:22-23) to justify control and abuse of their wives. In fact, we have rarely seen a client in marriage therapy bring up submission unless a big part of the problem is a controlling husband. Usually a husband wants to control and not serve his wife, and he is in denial of his own controlling behavior. When his wife has finally had enough and stands up to him, he plays the submission card as a way of getting back in control and avoiding whatever problem she is confronting. This is not what this passage had in mind. Basically, this passage establishes a sense of order in a marriage. It places final responsibility for the family on the shoulders of the husband. He is the “head,” or the leader of the family, as Christ is leader of the church. The passage asks the wife to submit to her husband’s leadership, as we all submit to Christ’s leadership.”

“What submission does not mean is that a husband just tells a wife what to do. Leadership does not mean domination. Marriages that work best have equal partners with differing roles. Decisions are best made mutually, as both parties with their different strengths bring in different perspectives. The husband should always submit to his wife’s needs as Christ did for ours . . . (Eph. 5:21)”

“The idea of submission is never meant to allow someone to overstep another’s boundaries. Submission only has meaning in the context of boundaries, for boundaries promote self-control and freedom. If a wife is not free and in control of herself, she is not submitting anyway. She is a slave subject to a slave driver, and she is out of the will of God. (Gal. 5:1). Seek each other’s best out of freedom, and submission issues will disappear.”

Excerpt from *Men & Women* by Larry Crabb:

“Headship and submission represent masculine and feminine movements in the dance of relationship. Headship and submission . . . are neither rules to follow nor roles that demand conformity. Rather, they are mature and loving expressions of our distinctive sexuality in the marriage relationship. A better solution is to define submission in more explicitly relational terms that accept masculine leadership as an essential and good element in biblical headship and grant to the woman an authority from God to intelligently, creatively, and sincerely serve her husband with the unique resources of her femininity.”

“God does not grant authority to the “position” of husband and then permit whomever occupies that position to use this authority whenever he sees fit without a priority concern to serve the well-being of his wife. The authority of a husband is not an “authority-in-reserve.” It is not a badge that, when pinned to his chest, makes him a sheriff.”

Excerpt from *Intimate Allies* by Dan Allender and Tremper Longman III

“Husband and wife need to submit to one another. (Ephesians 5:21) Mutual submission means we will lay down our lives for our spouses’ glory. Christian men are not to be abusers; they are to be considerate to their wives . . . to treat them with honor and respect. (1 Peter 3:7) Women are told that their attitude toward their husbands needs to be marked by submission, a bowing of their will to the will of their husbands. Headship is not to be understood as the dictatorship of the husband wielding his own will over the rest of the household. The male is not superior to the female any more than God the Father is superior to the Son, who is equally God and said to look to the Father as his ‘head.’ (1 Co. 11:3) A continual dominance in the name of submission will damage the union of two equal beings.”