Sermon Notes

Speaker: Patrick Mead

6/15/25

The Discipline of Submission.

Romans 12:9-21

Discipline is not punishment. We have confused the terms, and that makes subjects such as the one today difficult to teach. People turn off their ears when they hear the words “discipline” and “submission.” That is understandable when we’ve heard words such as “we are going to have to discipline you” and punishment followed.

Submission sounds like losing, and we don’t like losing. Submission sounds like taking not only a loss but also an unpleasant consequence.

Once again, in Christianity, these words are positive words and mean something very different from how the world uses them.

“Discipline” means to bring into line, to follow. Many of you have certain disciplines: a set time to read, a time to watch our videos, an exercise routine of some sort, or gardens to tend. Since you are watching this or listening to a podcast, you have another discipline in your life. You have decided to put this information into your head and, possibly, work it into your life. That is a positive thing, not punishment.

The purpose of discipline is freedom. If you do stretches and walk every day, your discipline is freeing you from a host of problems that accrue when one sits in a chair too long. If you learn the discipline of study and learn how to teach what you’ve learned, you’ve freed yourself to teach without fear. The disciplines are for the purpose of realizing a greater good, not just for the good of mankind but for our good as well.

What freedom is gained when we learn the discipline of submission? Freedom from always having to be right and always having to have our way. You’ve seen children throw a fit in a store, demanding this or that treat. It is uncomfortable, and we hope that they gain some control or learn some discipline. Have you seen an adult lose it over something and react the same way as that kid?

The universe is not here to serve us, and sometimes we will not get our way. How are you going to deal with that? God created billions of people, and some of them will prevent you from doing this or that when you want to do it. How will you handle that?

We usually try to get around this by saying that what we are fighting for is not a candy bar at the store or the right-of-way on the interstate. What WE want is a critical issue and worth the fight. That is how almost all church fights start and why they continue. Most congregations in the USA are below 100 in attendance. Many of them have been run by a few members, perhaps a family, that gets it own way far too often.

The fact is that most things in life are not major issues. Most things are not bigger than the command of Jesus to love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength and to love our neighbor as ourselves.

Jesus started his public ministry with a sermon we call the Sermon on the Mount. He gave this sermon many times, with another version being found in Luke, the Sermon on a Level Place. In each, he calls us to change our view of other people. We are not given a host of rules about outer actions but, rather, inner thoughts. Instead of not murdering, do not hate or insult. Instead of not committing adultery, do not lust after other people.

We are free to care about others. We no longer must be sitting in a throne room in our brains. We can care for others, as Paul said in Romans 12:9-21. Because of chapter breaks, we often don’t notice that Paul continues that discussion into chapter 13 when he says to be subject to the ruling authorities. He says that will free you from fear. Romans 13:1-7.

Paul is not done. He brings it back to what I said a moment ago: our task is to love God and love each other. Romans 13:10.

In chapter 14:1-15:7, Paul goes on the longest sustained single-issue lesson in this book, and it is all about submitting to each other, avoiding arguments, and being at peace with one another.

- 14:1, 4, 10, 13, 19.
- 15:1-3a, 5-7.

Jesus never said, “Pick up thy throne and follow me.” He said, “Pick up your cross and follow me.” As he submitted to the will of His Father and then submitted to our needs and paid our debts, he calls us to live a life of submission to God and to each other. Phil. 2:1-18.

Self-denial is not self-hatred. We do not have to debase ourselves to submit to another. We should have learned this when we played with our children. We stacked the blocks, and they knocked them down. We built a sand fort, and they plowed a toy truck through it. We were submitting to them for their good without looking at ourselves as failures.

Next week, we will talk about the discipline of service. In service, we act out our submission BECAUSE of our high view of ourselves and others. 1st Corinthians 9:19-23. We are free to adapt, to give way, to share what we have, and to love those unloved by others.

People will disapprove of all of this, of course. They will not want us to love all people; they only want those of whom they approve to be loved. They want to call this or that issue a major, critical one that needs to be fought over, even at the cost of the souls of others and the peace of the community. (If you keep throwing your trash over the fence, I will continue to pick it up)

Do we ever speak up? Do we ever fight back? Of course. There are times when we see injustice, and there are mechanisms in place for righting the ship, so we speak to the authorities. We go through the process. We appeal the grade we were given, or we ask for a group meeting to decide who is in the right. Even while doing all of this, we remain gentle, peaceful, and submissive to the reality that other people are valuable, one-of-a-kind creations of our Father, and that we are not on this planet to rule it. We are here to shine with the light of the One who told us to pick up our cross and follow Him.