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Sermon Notes

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Eternal Submission to God's Heavenly Throne

1 Corinthians 15:28

We human beings have a massive problem when it comes to authority and submission.

In 1887, Lord Acton, an English Catholic historian wrote his most famous words: "Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely." He was writing to a friend answering the question why so many popes tended to become wicked tyrants, especially during the Inquisition.

We have seen clear evidence of the corrupting effect of power in every generation. Jesus noted in the first century that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over their people and use their authority to crush and dominate them. Centuries before that, Daniel likened human empires to beasts that tore flesh and consumed it and trampled people underfoot. Kings and dictators and premiers and masters and bosses have arisen in every generation and used their power to feed their flesh and their egos and to crush and destroy those they rule.

On the other side of the equation, I have noticed in my own heart how much I struggle to submit to other people's authority. I remember being on a historical tour in a city in Bulgaria, and I was standing in a certain position on some stairs, and the tour guide asked me to get down... he didn't want anyone standing on that stair. Man, did I struggle with that! Actually all my life, from childhood, I

have struggled to submit to orders and commands... and I suspect I'm not alone in this problem!

But scripture reveals that our life in the new universe that is coming will perfectly revolve around the throne of Almighty God. All creation will be harmonious, in perfect balance around the absolute total POWER OF GOD'S THRONE. And every creature will DELIGHT IN THAT THRONE. That is the glorious future, a future of perfect submission to a power that DOES NOT CORRUPT AT ALL. And we will DELIGHT to submit.

Today's text zeroes in on that reality... for it asserts that Christ, when he has subdued all the enemies that opposed God, will effectively wrap up all creation in one perfect harmony, and present it to God, and representing it, will himself as the Son of Man be eternally in subjection to God, so that GOD WILL BE ALL IN ALL.

Context: We are in the middle of a great chapter – 1 Corinthians 15 – in which the apostle Paul defends and expounds the great doctrine of the resurrection of the body. There were some in the Corinthian church who were teaching that bodily resurrection from the grave CANNOT happen, DOES NOT happen, perhaps even that it OUGHT NOT happen:

1 Corinthians 15:12 ... how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?

Paul points to Christ's resurrection as essential to the Christian message... he begins by reminding them of the basic gospel message that they first heard from him, and that they believed in order to become Christians in the first place:

***1 Corinthians 15:3-4 Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures,
⁴ that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures***

The resurrection of Christ from the dead was essential to this gospel message... so much so that Paul says without it, Christianity itself is worthless:

1 Corinthians 15:14 if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith.

But Paul's point here in this chapter is not to prove that Christ has been raised from the dead. No, he is arguing that Christ's resurrection from the dead proves that someday, we ourselves will also be raised from the dead in resurrection bodies:

1 Corinthians 15:20 But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.

But Paul needs to answer why death seems to go on as always... killing dearly beloved Christians, lowering them in the grave, destroying their bodies with awful corruption. Paul says that we are in an intervening period in which the fullness of Christ's mighty resurrection victory is being applied gradually by the Father. Little by little, the Father is subduing all of his enemies – all of Christ's enemies:

1 Corinthians 15:25-26 he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. ²⁶ The last enemy to be destroyed is death.

Since death is the FINAL ENEMY, it will continue to steal, kill, and destroy... it will continue to wreak havoc on planet Earth until God finally decides to end all of human history

Meanwhile the gradual extension of Christ's reign all over the world must happen before the end comes... Every tribe, nation, people, and language has people chosen before the foundation of the world. They must be rescued by evangelism and missions. So the final enemy, death, is allowed to continue to wreak havoc until God's elect have all been saved.

After that has happened, the kingdom will be consummated in eternity... and the perfect HARMONY of that heavenly Kingdom is the focus of our sermon today.

It will be a world perfectly content and submissive under the throne of Almighty God... no longer rebelling or murmuring or questioning or plotting against or raging about the sovereignty of God, the throne of God, the rule of God... it will be a world absolutely SUBMISSIVE to the kingly reign of God

1 Corinthians 15:28 When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will be made subject to him who put everything under him, so that God may be all in all.

I. The Rebellion Finally Subdued

A. Creation: God created all things and sat down to rule all things on his heavenly throne... Creator... King... Lawgiver... Judge

B. All Evil Flows from Rebellion

1. Sin entered the universe when Satan sought to topple God from his throne and become God in his place
2. Adam joined Satan by rebelling against God's command in Eden
3. 1 John 3:4 Sin is "lawlessness"... rebellion against God's laws
4. Sin is a pervasive power that flows in our hearts; it involves a basic yearning for independence from God's laws, God's rules, God's throne; it is a Declaration of Independence from God the King
5. The images of a STIFF-NECK and a HARD-HEART both have to do with reticence, resistance, rebellion against the word and purpose of God

C. The Gradual Subduing of All God's Enemies by His Victorious Son

1 Corinthians 15:24-25 Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. ²⁵ For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet.

1. All of God's spiritual enemies will be finally subdued... Satan, demonic powers... the "dominion, authority and power" he is subduing there represents EVIL POWERS in the heavenly realms

2. But it also extends to human enemies:

- a. Every human rebel will be either converted or crushed
- b. All the elect will be converted from rebellion to glad submission

Matthew 11:28-30 "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

D. This Process of Subduing of the Enemies of God Has Been Going on for Two Thousand Years

E. The Final Act is Yet to Come:

1 Corinthians 15:26 The last enemy to be destroyed is death.

Revelation 20:14 Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death.

The submission of the Son to the Throne of God is the Finish Line of Redemption

II. The Perfect Submission of the Son Already Displayed

A. Philippians 2

Philippians 2:6-11 [Jesus], being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, ⁷ but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. ⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death-- even death on a cross! ⁹ Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

It is vital for us to understand that, in eternity past, the Son was essentially, ontologically truly EQUAL to his heavenly Father in all respects... fully God, truly God, eternally God; but he CHOSE

TO ADD a human nature, to become incarnate; I reject any kind of eternal subordination of the Son within the Trinity

B. God-Centered Obedience at Every Moment of His Earthly Life

John 8:28-29 I do nothing on my own but speak just what the Father has taught me. The one who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone, for I always do what pleases him.

C. Pinnacle of Obedience: Gethsemane and the Cross

Matthew 26:39 "My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will."

So, Jesus was perfectly obedient to his Father at every moment of his earthly life, from birth to death

But 1 Cor. 15:28 is going beyond that... asserting future submission

III. The Eternal Submission of the Son

A. Final Submission Asserted

1 Corinthians 15:28 When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things in subjection under him, that God may be all in all.

This is a FUTURE subjection... it has not happened yet

The Son will be formally and finally SUBJECTED to God

B. Eternal Submission... Not Just One Time and Never Again

C. What This Eternal Submission Is Not

1. This does not in any way imply that Jesus is a created being, like the Jehovah's Witnesses teach
2. This is not asserting eternal functional subordination of Jesus as the Second Person of the Trinity or what some call the Eternal Relationship of Authority and Submission... they are arguing this is essentially WITHIN the TRINITY; I deny that

3. Jesus has the right to full equality with the Father in position and glory and the right to receive worship

John 17:5 And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began.

D. What This Eternal Submission Is

1. Jesus AS THE SON OF MAN, as the perfect HUMAN BEING took on a permanent role as servant to his Father
2. The depths of the incarnation of Jesus Christ is infinite and beyond our ability to comprehend
3. Philippians 2: Jesus was in the FORM OF GOD... and it was not robbery for him to be considered God; but in becoming man, took the FORM OF A SERVANT; fully God, fully man; fully worshiped, fully obedient
4. This one vision says it all for me:

Revelation 5:6 Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing in the center of the throne

Slain Lamb = full submission; standing in the center of the throne = full deity

So, what is the significance of the eternal subjection of the Son of Man to Almighty God??

IV. The Eternal Harmony of the Universe

A. Christ Represents All Creation

Colossians 1:15 Christ is the firstborn of all creation.

“the firstborn” speaks of rank, preeminence, position...

He is called “creation” only in terms of his HUMANITY... his physical body was a creation (AND his resurrection body)

In that position as firstborn over all Creation, he REPRESENTS all Creation; and in his willing submission to God Almighty, he

represents that all creation is gladly submissive to the throne of God. The REBELLION IS OVER FOR ALL ETERNITY

B. Christ's Final Subjection = the Universe is One With God

1 Corinthians 15:28 ... that God may be all in all.

What does that mean? That God's will and purpose and power and plan and glory are EVERYTHING

Romans 11:36 For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen.

"That God may be all in all" means that God's role as originally creating all things and sustaining all things will be seen continually and clearly:

Hebrews 1:3 The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word.

When we walk around in the New Jerusalem, we will see everything in that city illuminated by the glory of God:

Revelation 21:10-11 the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God. ¹¹ It shone with the glory of God, and its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal.

Revelation 21:23 The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp.

C. Positively: The Throne is the Center of the New Universe

Christ's subjection to the Father = culmination of the Kingdom of God

1 Corinthians 15:24 Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power.

The central issue of the Kingdom of God is glad submission to His kingly rule

So, in eternity, the throne of God is the center of the New Universe:

1. The throne is the center of heaven NOW... In Revelation 4, John ascended from Patmos through an open door into the heavenly realms, and immediately saw the THRONE OF GOD

But when the Kingdom comes, the throne will be the center of BOTH heaven and earth alike:

Matthew 6:10 your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

2. All worship centers on the throne

Revelation 4:6 In the center, around the throne... [four living creatures and twenty-four elders and a hundred million angels

CONCENTRIC CIRCLES! The throne is the center of worship forever and ever

The Son's subjection to the throne represents all of creation willingly falling down before God enthroned and giving him the glory he deserves

3. Especially the redeemed gather before the throne (Revelation 7)

Revelation 7:9-12 After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb.

4. The New Creation derives its order and existence from the throne

Revelation 21:5 He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!"

5. All life flows from the throne

Revelation 22:1-2 Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb² down the middle of the great street of the city.

6. All blessedness comes from the throne

Revelation 22:2 On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.

7. All created beings gladly serve the throne

Revelation 22:3 The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him.

8. All purposes, drives, initiatives for heavenly life start at the throne

9. All glorious heavenly achievements go back to the throne

Revelation 21:24-26 The kings of the earth will bring their splendor into the New Jerusalem. ²⁵ On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there. ²⁶ The glory and honor of the nations will be brought into it.

D. Negatively: All These Will Cease Forever

- No rebellion against God's throne
- No disobedience of God's throne
- No opposition to God's throne
- No disagreement with God's throne
- No questioning of God's throne
- No challenging of God's throne
- No resistance to God's throne
- No murmuring against God's throne
- No sullen chafing under God's throne
- No complaining against God's throne
- No ignoring of God's throne
- No independence from God's throne

E. All Subordinate Authority Will Also Be Submitted To

1. There will be a chain of command in heaven... with all authority in the New Heaven and New Earth going back up to God

Revelation 22:3-5 The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. ... And they will reign for ever and ever.

2. Eternally delegated authority

Revelation 19:16 On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.

3. Daniel predicted kingly rule under the overall rule of God

Daniel 7:27 [God's] kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all rulers will worship and obey him.

4. Some of the parables imply differing levels of heavenly authority

In the Parable of the Ten Minas, (1 mina = 100 days' wages):

Luke 19:16-19 "The first one came and said, 'Sir, your mina has earned ten more.' ¹⁷ "'Well done, my good servant!' his master replied. 'Because you have been trustworthy in a very small matter, take charge of ten cities.' ¹⁸ "The second came and said, 'Sir, your mina has earned five more.' ¹⁹ "His master answered, 'You take charge of five cities.'

So, in the New Heaven and New Earth, some redeemed will be in charge of more things than others... reigning over other redeemed people

BUT the Son's subjection to the throne of God represents that there will be no rebellion AT ALL, including to heavenly God-ordained authority

Those in authority will not LORD IT OVER those under them; and those being ruled will not chafe under that structure or rebel

F. The Harmony of Creation

1. The earth itself was cursed in Adam's fall: ***"Cursed is the ground because of you! It will produce thorns and thistles for you"***
2. This curse has resulted in disharmony with God's original purpose... seen especially in DEATH and DECAY

Romans 8:20-21 the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope ²¹ that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God.

3. The churning of the seas represents this disharmony

Isaiah 57:20 But the wicked are like the tossing sea, which cannot rest, whose waves cast up mire and mud.

4. The Son's subjection to the Father represents ALL THINGS IN HEAVEN AND ON EARTH HARMONIZED

Mark 4:39 Jesus got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Quiet! Be still!" Then the wind died down and it was completely calm.

Revelation 4:6 Also before the throne there was what looked like a sea of glass, clear as crystal.

The Son's authority over nature coupled with his subjection to the Father's throne implies ALL NATURE IN PEACEFUL HARMONY with God's purpose

Isaiah 11:6-9 The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together.... They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.

G. That God May Be All in All

1 Corinthians 15:28 When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things in subjection under him, that God may be all in all.

1. Oneness: the scattering of sin is finally over; the "fragmentation grenade"

Ephesians 1:9-10 to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ.

John 17:22-23 that they may be one as we are one

V. Application

A. Submit to Christ's Kingly Yoke!! [Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest]

1. Constant rebellion against God's kingly rule is exhausting and oppressive and a terrible burden!
2. Throw down all your weapons of revolt and submit yourselves to God and to Christ

B. Christians: See the patterns of rebellion still in your heart

1. ***Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts!***
2. As you read God's Word, submit to it!! Do what it says
3. All present habits of sin are forms of rebellion against God's law
4. Understand that God's Law is not a BURDEN... it is rebellion against the throne that is the true burden

C. Look Forward to an Eternity of Harmony Around the Throne

1. The subjection of the Son of Man (Jesus) as our mediator to the eternal throne of God is

D. Understand that Submission to Authority Itself Is Good, Not Evil

1. Jesus has redeemed authority... he is the SERVANT-KING who washed feet
2. "Power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely" (But not God or Christ! Their power is essential to their being and it is perfectly PURE... it is rebellion against his kingly rule that corrupts!)
3. In heaven, Christ will serve AND rule

Luke 12:37 I tell you the truth, he will dress himself to serve, will have them recline at the table and will come and wait on them.

4. So, ask God to root out of your heart all forms of rebellion and look forward to a perfectly orderly universe around the Kingship of God