

AUTHORITY

WEEK 2: AUTHORITY AND GOVERNMENT

INTRODUCTION TO THE SERIES

- In this series we will be discussing the uses and abuses of authority in the realms of government, church, family, and education. God has given his creation, since before the fall, various areas of authority. God is a God of order, not chaos. By design, there are authorities placed over every creature. From infants to kings, all people must understand godly living under authority. This course will not be based on political leanings, philosophy, or opinions, so please bring your Bibles. We want to understand God’s Word on authority.
- Humanity understands chaos in these areas where God has given order. There is instability, chaos, and lost blessing when there is no authority, abused authority, or insubordination in our world. Just ask a country in civil war, a child in a fatherless home, a parent of a stubborn child, or a middle manager with lazy workers and a difficult supervisor.
- God perfectly planned these authority structures in our life, provided the instruction of how we should lead and follow, but also empowered us to faithfully do so.
- There should be a plethora of implications for life for everyone regarding children, parents, schools, government, workplace, governments, church, and even your HOA, but most of all, we should gain a larger view to the supremacy of God in every sphere of our life.
- **Class Schedule:**
 - January 11: Introduction and God’s Authority
 - **January 18: Authority and the Government**
 - January 25: Authority and the Government Part 2
 - February 1: Authority and the Family
 - February 8: Authority and the Church
 - February 15: Authority and Education and the Workplace

DISCUSSION

- Did anyone have a different view of the believer’s relationship to government before COVID than now?
- Did you tend to lean toward “**Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities**” or toward “**We must obey God rather than men**”?
- Do you have a way to determine when government is able to be obeyed, not obeyed, or obeyed with great caution?
- How can a believer obey Romans 13:1-2 under Nero, a dictator who used burning Christians as substitutes for his garden lamps?
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GOD'S AUTHORITY

- God created and reigns over all things and has authority over all things.

Psalm 24:1 ~ The earth is the Lord's, and all it contains, the world, and those who dwell in it.

- God's Word stands above all other contrived sources of authority (man, reason, intuition, experience, tradition, rationality).

1 Thessalonians 2:13 ~ For this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe.

- God's Word is authoritative because *ultimate authority* is God's:
- Submission does not mean lower value.
- God's Authority is Perfect, Human Authority is Flawed, yet God-appointed.

Romans 13:1-2 ~ Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God. 2 Therefore whoever resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God...

- Tim Challies: "God rules his world through the rule of others; he exercises his authority through the authority he delegates to human beings."¹
- Obedience to God is Better than Sacrifice.

1 Samuel 15:22-23 ~ Samuel said, "Has the Lord as much delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, *And* to heed than the fat of rams.

23 "For rebellion is as the sin of divination, And insubordination is as iniquity and idolatry.

Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, He has also rejected you from *being* king.

- Disobedience
- Fear of man
- Rebellion and self-appointed rule
- Idolatry

¹ Tim Challies, "On Following Mediocre Leaders," <https://www.challies.com/articles/on-following-mediocre-leaders/>

7 KEY PRINCIPLES OF GOVERNMENT AUTHORITY:²

1. We should view government as being made up of individuals with eternal souls (Rom 12:14-21)

- What are the consequences of thinking the government is an amorphous thing rather than made up of human beings?
- How then should we view the people that are in civil positions of authority?

Titus 3:1-7 _____

1 Timothy 2:1-4 _____

“Christians, do not mock your mission field! ... It may well be that our elected officials and unelected bureaucrats often act in ways that are unjust come unrighteous, and unfitting for the importance and dignity of their office. But is it right to respond to their sin by committing the exact same type of sin ourselves?”

2. We should view it as having authority delegated from God (Rom 13:1-2)

- Why are we so tempted to fall into corrupt desires and despising authority?

2 Peter 2:9-10 ~ “the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from temptation, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgment, 10 and especially those who indulge the flesh in *its* corrupt desires and despise authority.”

- *Be in subjection*, meaning, to under a rank. Our rank is under our superiors just as a soldier.

“Yet civil authority, even with a Nero at its head, was still in principle a thing divine. And the Christian’s attitude to it was to be always that of a **willingness, a purpose, to obey; an absence of the resistance whose motive lies in self assertion**. Most assuredly his attitude was not to be that of the revolutionist, who looks upon the State as a sort of belligerent power, against which he, alone or in company, openly or in the dark, is free to carry on a campaign. **Under even heavy pressure the Christian is still to remember that civil government is, in its principle, “of God.”** He is to reverence the Institution in its idea. He is to regard its actual officers, whatever their personal faults, as so far dignified by the Institution that their governing work is to be considered always first in the light of the Institution. The most imperfect, even the most erring, administration of civil order is still a thing to be respected before it is criticized. In its principle, it is a “*terror not to good works, but to the evil.*”³

² Brett Laird, *Family, Government, and Church*, 22-35. Pastor Brett is the senior pastor of Calvary Bible Church in Kalamazoo, MI.

³ Handley Moule, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Fort Washington, PA: Christian Literature Crusade, 1975), 349–350.

5. We should view it as a safeguard for when the human conscience fails (Rom 13:5)

- Our conscience is the internal element of restraint against evil.
- Garbage-in-garbage-out.
- A key restraining influence on human evil, but not infallible, and it can be seared, misinformed, or suppressed.

Romans 2:15 ~ in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them,

- A witness to the truth, accusing or defending the person whether or not he or she keeps God's law.
- The conscience can fail, deceiving and turning someone away from truth.
- "since Christians were constantly charged with turning the world upside down, and since there certainly were elements enough in Christianity of moral and social revolution to give plausibility to the charge, and tempt noble spirits, crushed under misgovernment, to take redress into their own hands, **it was of special importance that the pacific, submissive, loyal spirit of those Christians who resided at the great seat of political power, should furnish a visible refutation of this charge.**"⁶

6. We should view it as made up of servants of God, not as masters of men (Rom 13:6)

- Servants in each sector: Ministers of God are assigned by God.

Realm:	Head	Delegated Authority	Purpose:
Church:	Jesus	Elders	Appointed to plead with sinners to persuade sinners.
Gov't:	Rulers	Civil Servants	Appointed to plead with evildoers to prevent sin.
Family:	Father	Parents	Appointed to protect and nurture the family.

- "Undergirding all secular law and order is the authority of God delegated to those who rule."⁷

7. We should view it with appropriate respect and give its members appropriate honor (Rom 13:7)

- Taxes
- Civil Obligations
- Maintain civil order

Mark 12:17 ~ And Jesus said to them, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." And they were amazed at Him.

- Taxes, as well as custom, fear, and honor (Romans 13) are to be given to Caesar.

⁶ Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown, *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*, vol. 2 (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997), 254.

⁷ Mounce, 245.

- “They are to respect and honor governing authorities, “not because they are powerful and influential *men*, but because they have been appointed by God.”⁸
- What does your heart look like when thinking about the authorities God has placed over us? Are you not just a good citizen, but a model citizen (honor, respect, submission)?

Acts 23:2-5 ~ The high priest Ananias commanded those standing beside him to strike him on the mouth.

3 Then Paul said to him, “God is going to strike you, you whitewashed wall! Do you sit to try me according to the Law, and in violation of the Law order me to be struck?” 4 But the bystanders said, “Do you revile God’s high priest?” 5 And Paul said, “I was not aware, brethren, that he was high priest; for it is written, ‘You shall not speak evil of a ruler of your people.’ ”

5 KEY VERSES THAT GUIDE OUR THOUGHTS ABOUT GOVERNMENT:⁹

Key Verse 1: Matthew 28:18

Matthew 28:18-20 ~ And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, “**All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.** 19 “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, 20 **teaching them to observe all that I commanded you;** and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

- Since only God has unlimited authority, all delegated authority is limited authority.

Key Verse 2: Mathew 28:19

- Governments exceed their delegated authority when they either require disobedience against God or when they restrict obedience to God.

Key Verse 3: Mark 12:17

Mark 12:17 ~ And Jesus said to them, “Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.” And they were amazed at Him.

- Governments exceed their authority when they either demand worship, or prevent worship.
- Caesar’s realm falls within God’s Realm.
- What must be given to God?
- What must be given to Caesar?

⁸ Mounce, 245. Footnote: “Barrett, *Romans*, 248. φόβος as respect toward governing authorities is considered a higher form of reverence than τιμή...”

⁹ Brett Laird, *Family, Government, and Church*, 40-49.

We must give to Caesar what is Caesar's.

- “So give **taxes, revenue, respect, honor, or whatever else is owed** (notice that violence isn't on the list). We'll respect government's God-given authority. But for God's sake - as sacrifices to him - **don't give them what they don't deserve**. We can do this in faith because God "establishes" (a better interpretation is likely "orders" or "files") even the most powerful governments, and is able to use and bring good about in any circumstance. We are to give vengeance over to God (Rom. 12) and trust that he will bring about our good (Rom. 10) regardless of how powerful the evil of our day seems to be.”¹⁰
 - Anger, malice, violence, vengeance, vitriol, withholding prayer,
 - Support for ungodliness, sinful speech about other human beings

1 Peter 2:1 ~ Therefore, putting aside all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander,

Colossians 3:8 ~ But now you also, put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, *and* abusive speech from your mouth.

Titus 3:2 ~ Remind them to be subject to rulers, to authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good deed, 2 to malign no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing every consideration for all men.

Key Verse 4: Ephesians 5:23

Ephesians 5:23 ~ For the husband is the head of the wife, as **Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body.** 24 But as the **church is subject to Christ**, so also the wives *ought to be to their husbands in everything*.

- Governments exceed their delegated authority when they intrude on authority God has delegated exclusively to the church or to the family.
- Family: Children are to obey their parents; the wife is to submit to her husband because he is the head of the home.
 - The state does not have the right to redefine marriage, to limit childbirth, or to raise children.
 - “The village doesn't raise children, parents do!”¹¹
- Church: members are to submit to the elders, and elders are to submit to the Word of God, for Christ is the head of the church.
 - The state does not have a right to rule over the worship of the church, determine the leaders of the church, or how to discipline unrepentant members.

¹⁰ Derek Kreider, <https://www.dckreider.com/blog-theological-musings/romans-13-says-that-the-god-gives-the-government-the-right-to-bear-the-sword-so-christians-can-bear-the-sword-as-long-as-we-are-working-in-a-governmental-role-our-government-decrees-that-we-can-protect-ourselves-therefore-we-are-an-arm-of-the-governm>

¹¹ Baird, 47.

Key Verse 5: Acts 5:29

Acts 5:28-29 ~ saying, “We gave you strict orders **not to continue teaching in this name**, and yet, you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and intend to bring this man’s blood upon us.”

29 But Peter and the apostles answered, “**We must obey God rather than men.**”

- When governments exceed their delegated authority, believers have both the right and the duty to obey God rather than men.
 - Requiring disobedience against God
 - Restricting obedience to God
 - Demand worship
 - Prevent worship
 - Intrude on the exclusive authority of the church and family