

AUTHORITY

WEEK 3: AUTHORITY AND GOVERNMENT, PART 2

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

- When is it truly government overreach?
- Can a government become Christian? A nation? What make

7 KEY PRINCIPLES OF GOVERNMENT AUTHORITY:¹

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

Titus 3:1-7

1 Timothy 2:1-4

They are our mission field, not our enemy.

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

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.”

3. We should view it as having a responsibility to restrain evil and protect good (Rom 13:3)

4. We should view it as a minister of God’s wrath (Rom 13:4)

- God uses the punishments of governments and civil authorities to execute his judgment.

Proverbs 8:15-16 ~ “By me kings reign, And rulers decree justice.

 “By me princes rule, and nobles, All who judge rightly.

Isaiah 10:5-7 ~ Woe to Assyria, the rod of My anger And the staff in whose hands is My indignation,

6 I send it against a godless nation And commission it against the people of My fury

To capture booty and to seize plunder, And to trample them down like mud in the streets.

7 Yet it does not so intend, Nor does it plan so in its heart,

But rather it is its purpose to destroy And to cut off many nations. ²

- Evildoers should be afraid for our God is a benevolent avenger.
- How should evildoers be punished?
 - Just and fairly administered punishment that fits the offense (Deut 19:21), administered by the appropriate government agency, not individuals seeking revenge
 - Punishment that deters future crimes (Deut 13:11; 17:13; 19:20)
 - Punishment administered impartially, without regard for status or outcome.

¹ Brett Laird, *Family, Government, and Church*, 22-35. Pastor Brett is the senior pastor of Calvary Bible Church in Kalamazoo, MI.

² [New American Standard Bible: 1995 Update](#) (La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995), Is 10:5–7.

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.**"³

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."⁴

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.

³ 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.

⁴ 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.”⁵
- 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:⁶

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

- Note the command to make disciples.
- 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. (Ps 62:11)
- What must be given to God?
- What must be given to Caesar?

⁵ Mounce, 245. Footnote: “Barrett, *Romans*, 248. φόβος as respect toward governing authorities is considered a higher form of reverence than τιμή...”

⁶ 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.”⁷
 - 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!”⁸
- 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.

⁷ 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>

⁸ Laird, 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.⁹
 - Requiring disobedience against God
 - Restricting obedience to God
 - Demand worship
 - Prevent worship
 - Intrude on the exclusive authority of the church and family

WHAT SHOULD WE DO WHEN WE MUST OBEY GOD AND NOT MAN?

- Respectfully decline to disobey God, expecting to suffer the consequences or penalties that may result.¹⁰
- You may expect ungodly governments, as they so often persecute God’s people and disobey His laws.
- Expect to be hated as Christ was hated (John 15:18ff), even to the point of death, if for doing what is right (1 Peter 2:13ff; 3:17; 4:15).
- “For the church to have *this* much freedom from persecution for *this* long is an anomaly in church history”¹¹
- Beware of their schemes, being shrewd and wise, but don’t neglect the true task we were commissioned to (Matthew 10:16-20).
- Speak the gospel of Jesus Christ as commanded. Boldness to speak, stand, suffer (Acts 5:17-42).¹²
- Obedience doesn’t mean silence against many forms of evils.
- Jesus and the apostles promotes bold gospel proclamation, even to the government officials (Acts 26:28), not legislation change. That’s what turns the world upside down (Acts 17:6).
- Focus on individual spiritual maturity and glorifying God in word and deed
- You have the freedom to flee or hide, or to willingly suffer.

⁹ Laird, 76.

¹⁰ John MacArthur, *Godly Citizens Under Godless Kings*, 2024, adapted from *Why the Government Can’t Save You*, 2000, pg 28.

¹¹ Laird, 63.

¹² Nathan Busenitz, *God vs. Government*, “Biblical Exceptions and Pastoral Implications”, chapter 12, 148-149.

GOVERNMENT OVERREACH:

- **Churches** sometimes intrude the exclusive domain of government's leadership (The Holy Roman Empire and the 100's of thousands to millions who died in the Crusades).
 - Another example would be the abuse of sheep and "handling things internally" in some churches.
 - **Churches** sometimes intrude on the exclusive domain of the family with legalism and control.
 - **Families** overstep their boundaries when a father decides he can rule his family independently of a church or as a king separate from the government, out of tyranny and selfishness, and without checks and balances.
 - **Families** may also overstep the government authority by abuse or neglect of children without consequences.
 - But most often, we observe government exceeding its authority and intruding in on the church and family.
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- Churches have historically thrived and even grown "under the restrictive, totalitarian, and atheistic governments of the Soviet Union and China... At the same time, the professing church within the free and democratic environments of Western Europe and Japan is small, weak, and dead."¹³
 - **RED LIGHT**- The church should obey God rather than men when governments:
 - forbid or prevent assembly,
 - regulate or restrict the teaching of the church, and the elements of the church's worship,
 - interfere with the choosing and ordaining of spiritual leaders,
 - or stop or restrict the church from preaching the gospel to the lost.
 - **GREEN LIGHT**- There are issues in which two or three spheres have overlapping authority because God has delegated a task or responsibility to more than one authority:
 - Church and Family teach the Word.
 - Church and government work through the spiritual and legal fallout of an abused spouse.
 - Family and government and church may deal with a son who steals.
 - **YELLOW LIGHT**- There are some areas of dispute that are not as simple as "right or wrong" but rather, "better or worse" that require a judgement call based on the circumstances and require wisdom from each domain.
 - We need to be wise in choosing our battle with shrewdness, not in weakness.
 - Pray for wisdom (James 1:5), diligently study Scripture (Ps 119:105), and seek multiple godly counselors (Pr 11:14; 15:22; 24:6).

¹³ MacArthur, *Godly Citizens Under Godless Kings*, 18.