

Introduction

This week I was meeting with our builder and we were discussing how to work with the home owners association (HOA). In the subdivision that Karen and I are building in, there is a HOA and any fence or structure on the property must be approved by them before building. This builder told me that he has never worked with the HOA, and he thinks that forgiveness is easier to get than permission. I told him that I cannot preach that from the pulpit, and that I teach something far different than that. I told him that I was going to get the HOA approval and honor both the county ordinances related to set-backs, and the HOA requirements.

Many years ago, I was pastoring a church and we were going through a building program. We solicited input about the interior layout. We also set up a committee to pick out the carpet, tile, paint, etc. I wanted to get the congregation to take ownership of their facility, so I wanted to involve them as much as possible. I told the church and committee that I was going to have final approval of their choices. One person wanted to paint the facility mustard yellow, and I said no to that color selection. Immediately after that, I had to go to Europe on a business trip. When I returned, there was a group of people painting the sanctuary, and it was the mustard color that I specifically said no to prior to leaving. They were also putting in the tile floors, only not the tile that the committee had picked out. This person had changed the tile, and selected the paint color she wanted. When confronted, she said that forgiveness is easier to obtain than permission. To me, this was a clear case of rebellion to authority, and it was also taking advantage of my willingness to forgive people.

Our passage today is not about getting prior approval or obtaining forgiveness rather than permission, but it is about authority. Paul gives three answers to the question, “Why should everyone submit to governing authorities?” He said that we should submit to authorities because they have been established by God. Second, we should submit to authorities because they are God’s agents of righteousness. They commend those who do what is right and bring wrath to wrongdoers. Third, we should submit for conscience sake. We will cover the first two reasons today, and cover the third reason, for conscience sake, next week.

Why Should Everyone Submit to Authorities

1. We should submit because authorities have been established by God
2. We should submit because authorities are agents of God’s righteousness
3. We should submit for conscience sake

In preparing for this message I thought I would take a look at what material I have already prepared that deal with authority. I did an advanced search to include any of my studies and sermons that mention the word authority. I was quite surprised at what came up. I have 882 messages that deal with authority. Here are some examples from Mark, which we studied last year. In Mark 1:22, the people were amazed at Jesus’ teaching; for He was teaching them as one having authority, and not as the scribes. Then, in Mark 1:27, they were amazed again, because He was teaching with authority, and commanding the unclean spirits, and they obeyed Him.

(Mark 1:22) “They were amazed at His teaching; for He was teaching them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.”

Mark 1:27) “They were all amazed, so that they debated among themselves, saying, “What is this? A new teaching with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey Him.”

In Mark 2, Jesus told the paralytic that his sins were forgiven so that they would know that He had authority to forgive sins. In Mark 3:15, we have another passage speaking about Jesus' authority to cast out demons.

(Mark 2:10) "But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"—He *said to the paralytic,"

(Mark 3:15) "and to have authority to cast out the demons."

In Mark 6, Jesus summoned the twelve apostles and began to send them out in pairs, giving them authority over unclean spirits.

(Mark 6:7) "And He *summoned the twelve and began to send them out in pairs, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits;

In Mark 10:42-43, Jesus was talking about servant leadership, and he said the worldly leaders lord over people and their great men exercise authority over them. Then, He told them, "But it is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant. Leadership has authority, but it is not about authority; it is about serving people.

(Mark 10:42-43) "Calling them to Himself, Jesus *said to them, "You know that those who are recognized as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them; and their great men exercise authority over them. {43} But it is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant;"

In Mark 11:28-33, Jesus had overturned the money changers table and cleaned out the temple. The religious leaders questioned Him about who gave Him the authority to do this. He asked them if the baptism of John was from heaven or from men. They would not answer His question, so He told them He would not tell them by what authority he was doing these things.

(Mark 11:28-33) "and began saying to Him, "By what authority are You doing these things, or who gave You this authority to do these things? {29} And Jesus said to them, "I will ask you one question, and you answer Me, and then I will tell you by what authority I do these things....{33} Answering Jesus, they *said, "We do not know." And Jesus *said to them, "Nor will I tell you by what authority I do these things."

Finally, when I preached on the great commission in Mark 16, I brought up the parallel passage in Matthew 28, where Jesus said all authority had been given to Him, and then He commanded the disciples to go and make disciples. So, I had seven messages in Mark that touched on authority. There are 121 passages in the Bible that deal with authority, so there have been many opportunities to teach on authority.

Another reason for so many files that mention authority is that it is a big issue with people. People have had lots of bad experiences with authorities, and the result of that is mistrust, lack of respect, and lack of submission to authorities. God wants to heal people of past hurts and experiences caused by those in authority, and He also wants us to understand the principles of authority so that we can be under proper authority. So, let's take a look at our passage today on why everyone should submit to governing authorities.

(Rom 13:1-7) “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; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves. {3} For rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil. Do you want to have no fear of authority? Do what is good and you will have praise from the same; {4} for it is a minister of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath on the one who practices evil. {5} Therefore it is necessary to be in subjection, not only because of wrath, but also for conscience' sake. {6} For because of this you also pay taxes, for *rulers* are servants of God, devoting themselves to this very thing. {7} Render to all what is due them: tax to whom tax *is due*; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor.”

1. **We should submit because authorities have been established by God.** (Rom 13:1)

In verse one Paul gives the principle; we are to submit to authorities. God knew the hearts of men are fully given to evil and that people need governing authorities in their lives. Society needs laws so that there is law and order. A society without law and without any enforcement of those laws will be in disorder. Governing authorities are to reward good behavior and to punish poor behavior.

(Rom 13:1) “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.”

In Judges 17:6, we find that there was no king in Israel. Therefore, every man did what was right in his own eyes. When everyone does whatever they want, there is disorder. God gave us the principle of authority so that evil would be restrained in society, and there would be peace and order.

(Judges 17:6) "In those days there was no king in Israel; every man did what was right in his own eyes."

The principle is that all of us are to be in subjection to the governing authorities. The Greek word that is translated as subjection is *hupotasso* (Strong's G5293), and is often translated as submit. It literally means to be under proper order and arrangement. *Hupo* means under and *tasso* means to arrange in an orderly manner. *Hupotasso* is actually a military word, and when you see a platoon of soldiers in formation, they are in order. In James 4:6-7, we see a great contrast to *tasso*, which helps us understand it. God tells us that He is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble. The word opposed is *antitasso* (Strong's G498), which means against order and arrangement. Then, we are exhorted to submit, which is *hupotasso*, to God. When we are proud, God stands in military formation against us, so we are to submit to Him, getting under proper order and arrangement.

(Jam 4:6-7) “But He gives a greater grace. Therefore *it* says, "GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE." {7} Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.”

Paul gives the first of the three reasons why we are to submit to authorities; because they have been established by God. If we do not submit to authorities, which God has established, we are in rebellion to God. Submitting to authorities is one of many ways we submit to God.

In Titus 3:1, Paul instructed the apostle Titus to remind the people on the island of Crete to be subject to rulers and authorities. We are to submit to those who have rule over our lives and are in a position of authority. In Romans 13:1, the word governing is *huperecho* (Strong's G5252), which means higher, above, supreme, superior. The King James translates this as "be subject to higher powers." The word for authority is *exousia* and it means power or authority.

(Titus 3:1) "Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good,"

There are many authorities that we have over our lives. They have the responsibility to watch over us, protect us, make laws, enforce laws, and punish those who break the laws. They will also have to give account to God for how they have governed. There are many different areas of authority.

There are governmental authorities, such as presidents, congressmen, senators, governors, and mayors. These governmental authorities are on a federal, state, county, and city level.

There are authorities in our work place, and we are to submit to these supervisors. When we sign on to work for a company, we are submitting ourselves to their rule in that area of our lives. They don't have jurisdiction over what we eat, where we live, or where we worship, but in work-related matters, we have to submit to their decisions. Since we are not their slaves, we are free to go work somewhere else, which I have chosen to do once. I had a boss one time who treated me very disrespectfully. One day I told him that the next time that he or anyone else yelled at me, I was going to leave the company. A few weeks later, after another yelling session, I turned in my resignation as the VP and GM of the company. Because I resigned, he thought I had an anger problem. It was not an anger problem; I just chose to work at a company where honor and respect for one another was a core value. But while I was there, I had to submit to the owner's authority.

We have authorities in the family. Wives are to submit to their husbands. Children are to submit to their parents. God has established a government in the home so that we would have order in the home. Where there is no government in the home, there is chaos and disorder.

(Eph 5:22-24) "Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord. {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."

(Eph 6:1) "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right."

Finally, there are spiritual authorities. These are the leaders in the church. God's plan is for us to be members of a church, and in the church, there are elders and leaders that we must submit to. In 1 Peter 5:5, Peter exhorts the younger men to be subject to the elders.

(1 Pet 5:5) "You younger men, likewise, be subject to *your* elders; and all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE."

In Hebrews 13:17, God tells us to obey our leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over our souls as those who will give an account. As a church leader, I take this very seriously. I need

to be ready to give account for the people God has placed under my care and watch. Can I give account for each person? Do I know what is going on in their lives? I think that many church leaders will have a difficult time giving account when that day comes.

(Heb 13:17) “Obey your leaders and submit *to them*, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you.”

Within each type of authority, there are many levels of authority. In Ecclesiastes 5:8-9, Solomon wrote that one official watches over another official, and there are higher officials over them. In Exodus 18:21, Jethro counseled Moses to raise up leaders who were captains of tens, fifties, hundreds, and thousands. These are levels of leaders with varying capacities. When my son, David, was in the marines’ boot camp, he had to memorize the chain of authority, beginning with his platoon leader and going right up to the president of the United States. There are levels of authority in the spiritual realm, not just the government and military.

(Eccl 5:8-9) “If you see oppression of the poor and denial of justice and righteousness in the province, do not be shocked at the sight; for one official watches over another official, and there are higher officials over them.”

(Ex 18:21) “Furthermore, you shall select out of all the people able men who fear God, men of truth, those who hate dishonest gain; and you shall place *these* over them *as* leaders of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties and of tens.”

When my daughter, Amy, was young, she was sick for weeks and was not getting well. I prayed for her. Joe Warner prayed for her. Finally, we went to the Senior Pastor, David Loveless, and as soon as he prayed for her, she was healed immediately. He was a higher authority.

One day after teaching on authority, a lady came up to me and asked me who was the higher authority that I was submitted to. That was a great question that the lady asked. I told her that I have a number of people that I am submitted to. First, I submit to the Lord, and whatever He tells me to do. I have been in submission to other apostles. Right now, whenever there is an important decision, I check in with Joe Warner. I also give tithes of my church income to Joe. I am also submitted to the elders and leaders in the church. They are submitted to me, but I am also submitted to them. All major decisions go through our leadership board.

In the heavenly realm, there are angelic levels of authority. There are angels who are over continents, countries, states, counties, cities, towns, neighborhoods, families, individuals. We find an example of this in Daniel, when the prince of Persia detained an angel from helping Daniel for 21 days (Dan 10:13). We find angels assigned to churches in the book of Revelations. We find another example of levels/positions of authorities in the book of Jude.

(Dan 10:13) “But the prince of the kingdom of Persia was withstanding me for twenty-one days; then behold, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I had been left there with the kings of Persia.”

Since God has established authority, are all those in authority established by God? Does God put every single king, ruler, or president in power? Did God put Adolf Hitler in as the ruler of Germany, who killed six million Jews? Did God place Joseph Stalin as the leader of the Soviet Union, who killed twenty to thirty million of his own people? Many people teach that every

individual that is put in authority has been placed there by God. That would mean that God put Hitler in authority so that he could kill millions of Jews. That means that God put Stalin in a position of authority to kill millions of people. This does not make any sense. God loves people and He loves the Jews, His chosen people.

Hitler was an evil ruler that needed to be removed. It was the United States and the allied forces that fought against Hitler and stopped this evil ruler. Hitler was not working under God's authority. Hitler was not carrying out God's plans. He was not rewarding good behavior and punishing bad behavior. He was not restraining evil. He was killing millions of innocent people. He was an instigator of evil, not a restrainer. So, I teach that the principle of government is established by God, but not every individual in power has been sovereignly chosen and established by God.

Some rulers seize power; others are elected by the citizens, as our president is in America. God does not cast the votes; the people in America cast the votes. I do not blame God for the actions of any president or ruler. God gives us choice and responsibilities. God established the principle of authority. I do not believe that He puts every single authority in the position of authority. I believe that He raises up some in particular, but I also believe that there are some that are in power that He did not appoint. Look at what God says in Hosea 8:4. "They have set up kings, but not by Me; they have appointed princes, but I did not know it..." God specifically said that these kings and authorities were set up, but that it was not by Him.

(Hosea 8:4) "They have set up kings, but not by Me; they have appointed princes, but I did not know *it*. With their silver and gold they have made idols for themselves, That they might be cut off."

At the same time, God does raise up certain leaders. In Psalm 78:70-71, God chose David to shepherd His people. So, God chooses certain kings and does not choose other kings. I believe God set up the principle of authority, and it is to promote good behavior and to restrain evil. For those that teach that every single ruler or king was individually put in that position by God will have a difficult time reconciling their position with this Hosea 8:4. Are there problems with this view? Yes. Are there problems with the other view? Yes. God is sovereign, omnipotent, and can do whatever He desires. He can raise up someone anytime He wants. The main point in Romans 13 is that we should submit to governing authorities because they are established by God.

(Ps 78:70-71) "He also chose David His servant and took him from the sheepfolds; {71} from the care of the ewes with suckling lambs He brought him to shepherd Jacob His people, and Israel His inheritance."

One of the things that God tells us to do is to look at the fruit. The belief that Christians should not be involved in politics is very prevalent. It is estimated that forty million Christians do not vote in the elections. The fruit of this ideology has been very harmful to Christians and the gospel. The fruit of advocating our citizen rights has led to the government and courts being overrun with ungodly leaders and judges who are promoting evil and punishing good, which goes against God's will and purpose for governing authorities.

Many prominent theologians give many reasons that Christians should not be involved. Rooted in this belief is that God is sovereign, that we are citizens of heaven and not of earth, and we should be concerned about the gospel, not divisive matters like politics. We need to understand that God established government to promote good and restrain evil. We are commanded in 1

Timothy 1:1-2 to pray for kings and those in authority so that we can have peace. Jesus taught in Matthew 6:10 that we should pray for God's will to be done on earth as it is in heaven.

(1 Tim 2:1-4) “First of all, then, I urge that entreaties *and* prayers, petitions *and* thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, {2} for kings and all who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity. {3} This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, {4} who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.”

(Matt 6:10) “Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.”

When we become a Christian, we are not removed from the world, and we do not lose our citizenship. Paul remained a Roman citizen after being saved. While he did not always exercise his citizenship rights, he occasionally did. We are citizens of heaven and citizens of the country we live in. As citizens, we should use those rights to help elect leaders who will promote good and restrain evil. We are all better off with righteous leaders, laws that promote righteous behavior, so we need to pray, vote, and use our influence.

2. **We should submit because authorities are God's agents of righteousness.** (Rom 13:2-4)

Notice what Paul says in Romans 13:2-4, that those who resist authority have opposed the ordinance of God, and they that oppose will receive condemnation upon themselves. Rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but of evil. Authorities are ministers of God for good. We should submit to authorities because they are God's agents of righteousness.

(Rom 13:2-4) “Therefore whoever resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves. {3} For rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil. Do you want to have no fear of authority? Do what is good and you will have praise from the same; {4} for it is a minister of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath on the one who practices evil.”

If we do what is good, we will have praise, for it is a minister of God for good. But, if we do what is evil, we should be afraid, for the authorities are ministers of God who bring wrath on those that practice evil. So, we see that the principle of authority has been established for the good of society, to restrain evil and to promote good behavior.

During the past couple of years there has been a huge push to defund the police. They claim that the men in blue are prejudiced and out to harm certain people groups. There have been times where our public servants have made mistakes or responded improperly. At the same time, most of the incidents that I have looked at involved people who were resisting arrest, or trying to harm an officer. Officers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but of evil. If these people had simply obeyed the officers they would not have been hurt or killed. That is not a racial comment; it is a spiritual principle.

When you drive down the highway at the posted speed limit, you have no fear of being pulled over by an officer. There is no fear for good behavior. I saw in the news that a 36-year old man in Minnesota had been pulled over for driving 171 mph in his Camaro near the city of Duluth. Deputy Chief Shawn Padden of the Hermantown Police Department said this was the fastest

speeder in his 28-year career. The man was facing jail time, a loss of his license, and a hefty fine. If he had been driving the speed limit of 65 mph, he would never have been pulled over.¹

On the PGA Tour each year they give out the Payne Steward Award, which recognizes a player whose values and character are align with the character, charity, and sportsmanship of Payne. In 2021, Justin Rose received this award. God says that when we do what is good, we will have praise from authorities. While the PGA Tour is not a police department, this is a good example of the principle that God is teaching us. When someone disobeys the law, there is wrath to pay, and when someone does what is right, there is praise.

Conclusion and Applications

God has established authorities to promote and reward good behavior and to restrain and punish bad behavior. Therefore, we are encouraged to submit to governing authorities.

Submitting to our governing authorities involves most areas of our lives. At the house we are building, Karen and I are planning on building a shed. There is a 25-foot setback on the front and back of our property, so our desire was to submit to the county ordinances. We have a home owners association (HOA) and they also have to approve any shed or structure that is placed on a property. We worked with both governing authorities to get approval. When we drive in our cars, we have a choice to make about submitting to our governing authorities. When we drive the speed limit, we are submitting to our authorities. These are just two examples of submitting to our authorities.

In our text God gives several applications. In verse six, God tells us to pay our taxes. I have heard some Christians that say that we don't have to pay taxes, but the Scriptures tell us something very different; we are to pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants. Our government officials give their full time to governing, and need to be paid.

(Rom 13:6-7) "This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants, who give their full time to governing. {7} Give everyone what you owe him: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor."

God also tells us to pay revenue. There are many people in business that will give you a lower price on their goods and services if you pay them cash. They think that if they are paid cash, they don't have to report it and therefore do not have to pay tax revenue on it. But, according to the law, how you get paid does not matter; we are to report all income, cash or otherwise, and pay taxes on it.

God also tells us to give respect and honor to whom it is due. We should do this for all people, but in the context of the passage, we are to give respect and honor to our governing authorities. We may not like the governing official and we may not like their positions on issues, but we still need to honor them and respect them.

When I hear people bad mouthing a government leader, I tell them that God does not require me to like them or their policies, but I am required to pray for them, which I do every morning. Sometimes, it is difficult to talk about politics, especially when you do not believe a government leader is making good or righteous decisions. We have to honor the position, but we certainly do

¹ <https://www.newsmax.com/TheWire/camaro-mph-minnesota-duluth/2016/04/14/id/723957/>

not have to agree with the decisions and policies. So, we must stick to policies and issues, rather than attacking and dishonoring the leader; that is a fine line to walk.

Next week we will cover the third reason of why we should submit to governing authorities, which is for conscience sake.

Prayer:

Father God, You are the highest and ultimate authority. We submit our lives to you, and we call You Lord. One day every knee will bow and every tongue confess that You are Lord. You are a good authority, for You always do good. You reward good behavior and punish bad behavior. Father God, help us to submit to all governing authorities. Give us discernment and wisdom about when not to submit. Help us to be good citizens of heaven and good citizens of the country we live in. Help us to be a light and the salt of the earth. I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Q & A

- Is every governmental leader placed there by God?
- Do we need to get involved in politics and encourage people to exercise their right as a citizen and vote?
- What should you do when the government you are under are not promoting what is good, but are promoting evil policies that violate God's word?
- Is there ever a time where we need to resist governmental authorities? And if so, are we opposing the ordinance of God when we resist? (See Acts 4:19-20, Eccl 8:2-6.)
- How did Daniel and his friends respond to a government decree to eat things that would violate their conscience? (See Daniel 1:8-16.)
- According to 1 Timothy 2:1-2, what is one of the most important things we can do for government authorities?

