

Honoring All in Authority

Lord's Day 39

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This morning we turn to the book of Titus 2. We're going to read into chapter 3 through verse 6. Just take note of a couple things and the first is, that although the apostle is giving instruction on what the preacher is supposed to teach the people and that he categorizes this instruction to various age groups or one's status, that the emphasis is upon relationships, that is, how one lives with his neighbor whether in the home or in the church or even in the workplace so that when you read things like sobriety, it has to do with that in relationship to someone else. Secondly, notice that all these things are what the apostle calls good works. We often think of good works as some sort of deed sometime but notice how often these things are just attitudes, what we have in our heart. That's worth noting. Thirdly, and this is the direct connection to the sermon, notice the emphasis on obedience or submission that is found there, in fact, it's even buried in such terms as sobriety, that has to do with one's relationship to others in authority. And finally, notice how all of this, and we'll get to the end there, is rooted in what Christ has done for us, that is, it's the doctrine that is in harmony with that.

Titus 2,

1 But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine:

And notice what follows doesn't seem to be doctrine but it is.

2 That the aged men be sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity, in patience. 3 The aged women likewise, that they be in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things; 4 That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, 5 To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed. 6 Young men likewise exhort to be sober minded. 7 In all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine shewing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, 8 Sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you. 9 Exhort servants to be obedient unto their own masters, and to please them well in all things; not answering again; 10 Not

purloining [that's stealing], but shewing all good fidelity; that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things. 11 For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, 12 Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; 13 Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; 14 Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. 15 These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee.

1 Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work, 2 To speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, shewing all meekness unto all men. 3 For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. 4 But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, 5 Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; 6 Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour;

We read that far in God's holy word.

This morning we consider the instruction of the Heidelberg Catechism in Lord's Day 39.

Q. 104. What doth God require in the fifth commandment?

A. That I show all honor, love, and fidelity to my father and mother and all in authority over me, and submit myself to their good instruction and correction with due obedience; and also patiently bear with their weaknesses and infirmities, since it pleases God to govern us by their hand.

Beloved, in our Lord Jesus Christ how wise is our God and his wisdom is unsearchable, and hopefully we see that this morning as we consider this word of God in the light of he who is wisdom itself, Jesus Christ, he who has fulfilled this law in every aspect and also the one to whom we are joined so that we have access to this wisdom through him. The wisdom of God with regard to his commandments is amazing and is why the child of God loves the law of God in Jesus Christ. He learns much.

You see that when you just simply look at the organization of the law. I've pointed out some of these things before to you, but you will notice, hopefully you have noticed that there are only two positive requirements in the law, in other words, the law is stated positively in only two commandments, the other eight are negative, "Thou shalt not." Those two positive commandments, "Thou shalt," occur back-to-back. The one concludes

the first table of the law, "Thou shalt keep the Sabbath day holy." God concludes the first table of the law with that commandment positively because the Lord is setting forth that that's the commandment where we really carry out all the other three with the other three commandments, even though the first commandment is indeed the most important and the one that really explains all the other commandments, it is the commandment above all, "Thou shalt have no other gods," it's the fourth that's positive because God is saying, "This is where you show God is your God, that he is no idol in your Sabbath worship." But now notice that the other positive commandment begins the second table of the law. Back-to-back, there they are. So God is by the Holy Spirit saying, "Wake up. Take notice. There's something going on here."

And also God is teaching something very fundamental there which is that this is the most important commandment of all of them in the second table, and therein the wisdom of God overturns our wisdom. If you and I were making the commandments and even if you look at the commandments strictly speaking according to what we know they would be, this is not the commandment we would have first. The commandment that in our mind should be first would be the sixth, and the reason for that it is the sixth commandment, the commandment forbidding killing and murder that really summarizes the whole second table and that comes out in the instruction of the Heidelberg Catechism if you read it. We will next time we go through this, the Lord willing, you'll see that it's the commandment that forbids hate, a certain expression of hate, and requires that positively we love our neighbor as ourselves. Well, that's the whole second table of the law, so why isn't the sixth commandment first? Because the commandment to honor father and mother is fundamental to all the rest. It underlies them all and therein lies the wisdom of God.

It's also stated strangely. It is "honor father and mother," but we all know and the church has always known it's about all authority as the Heidelberg Catechism makes clear. So why bring it out the way it does? Why not "honor all authority"? Well, again, the wisdom of God and we're going to take note of that as we proceed through this commandment this morning, the Lord willing. So consider with me, will you, this commandment to honor all authority and we're going to notice in the first place, simply the commandment itself, what's it laid out, what's its desire and want, and the second is, that this is to be childlike, and in the third place, Christ-like.

This commandment comes first and the connection and why it's first might not be readily apparent. As I said, you would think there would be a commandment that more directly links the summary of the second table, "Love your neighbor as yourself," with the commandment itself as the sixth commandment does. But this is first and therein God is telling us an awful lot. The reason it's first is that you have to understand that in the first place the commandments express the will of God. They're not arbitrary. God does not simply lay upon us a bunch of rules and say, "Here, follow these," but the commandments and law of God express his own will whether it's first table or second table, and what that means and implies is obedience and submission to God himself.

That's implied in the first table but now here God expresses it more clearly. To put it another way, that what links them all together is submission to God, honoring God, and God here is teaching that which the apostles make clear in the New Testament, very clear. It's that connection between the first and second table of the law which is that we really express our love for God by how we live with our neighbor. That's where it comes to expression, beside worship now, and in doing so, what is most fundamental is honoring the authority and the will of God. Without that, there is no keeping of the commandments, there is no love of neighbor possible, and we will see that as we proceed but that is why it's first. It's talking about honoring the neighbor in some way, honoring some authority that is our neighbor, but underlying it all is honor God. Honor God. And the Lord is teaching that this is the most fundamental of the whole table and that without it, you will never honor your neighbor in any other way.

That comes out now when you look at the commandment itself, and some of this I'm going to save for when we get to our second point, but notice that the commandment which is to honor your father and mother is explained as showing not only honor but love and fidelity and it also includes submitting to their good instruction and correction with due obedience, and it also has to do with patiently bearing up. Now what that shows, you may, for example, wonder about how in the world that applies to all in authority and that's what we're going to concentrate on the first point, all in authority. The church in the Old Testament, the church in the New Testament has always understood that God is not limiting this honor simply to father and mother but all authority. Now in the Catechism it's explaining it, it's specifically talking about children to their parents and so we may look at these requirements and say, "How in the world can I love all authority or show fidelity to all authority? I get submit, I get obedience." And you may summarize those for now love being to give service to them, to serve them. It's talking about that kind of love. Love is essentially service. Love is to essentially give yourself for the benefit of another, that's what it is and its assets, and it's not much different than what the apostle said to the servants in the passage that we read, to be obedient and to please them well in all things.

So that's one thing you can see that this includes when it comes to all authority, it means to serve them, to serve them well, so that when the government who has authority over you comes along and says, "We have to enlist you in service," you go and you do it. Or if it's your employer and he's your authority and he says, "Now there's this service, this work that you must do," you do that. That's an expression of what it means to love. And fidelity means that you're faithful in that. You honor your word. You as much as possible speak well of them and deal with them that way. And so those things can be explained quite well but then there's this business of honor and that has to do with the two concepts of submission and obedience. That's really what it's talking about. Honor, submission and obedience all go together. You may see honor as the overarching thing and that being broken out into two things, submission and obedience, and here we have to be very very careful so I will explain to you as carefully as I can. Submission and obedience are very very closely tied together, virtually inseparable, so much is that true that the Bible even uses the words interchangeably in places. "Children, obey your parents in the Lord," we read in holy scripture and that word "obey" doesn't mean simply do what they say but it

means the same thing as honor, submit. So they're very closely tied. The link is that obedience is generally the way we express honor. That's the link.

So they're joined together and yet they are not the same and we know that. We know that from experience, so that we have children and we tell our child something to do and they go ahead and do it but the manner in which they do it shows they are not at all honoring your authority. You tell them to clean their room and they stomp down the hall and slam the door and throw things around and they then go on to clean their room, but you know that in their heart is rebellion. They really haven't honored you as authority nor really did they obey, although in form they did. That's one reason we have to distinguish them, but the other is that they really are different and submission is the most important.

Submission, that aspect of honor, is very very simple. It is not complicated, it is not hard to figure out, and it is the one thing that ought to come to your mind when you think about the fifth commandment. What is submission? It is very simple: it is simply to recognize that God gave authority to someone over you. It is simply a recognition, an acknowledgment, a confession. Now it's an acknowledgment and confession not simply that this one has authority over me. That's not submission, not really, but it is the recognition, the honoring, the confessing that this person or this group has authority from God. To put it another way, it is to recognize that God's will is being exercised over me through that person. Anything less than that is not submission. Submission is not recognizing that this person has power over me, that they have certain even rights over me, that they're bigger, they're stronger, that they can influence me by that power and by that might. If that's all that a child's submission to a parent is, that will be disastrous, and if that's all a parent insists on, that will be disastrous because sooner or later the child grows up and can often be bigger and stronger than his parents. We do not submit to the government because they have a big strong army and police men and other things that they can exert over us, submission that this person has authority God gave and thus God rules over me through them. That's very very important. Take the "God" out of it and you will never submit except because they're bigger and badder and stronger.

That's why this is first, beloved, and why it's essential and basic to all the other commandments. We obey the commandments because they are God's will and obeying God's will is submission, and God has distributed his authority to others. God does that. It doesn't matter who they are. It doesn't matter how evil they are. It doesn't matter how wicked they are. It doesn't even really matter how powerful they are. God is pleased to give authority in various ways and submission is simply to say, "I recognize that." That's what's helpful too when we're inclined to all evil with regard to this commandment.

Another reason why this commandment is first and why it's so fundamental is God knows who we are. What are we essentially as human beings, beloved? When we talk about the fact that we are depraved and therefore prone to hate God and our neighbor, how does that come to expression? Where does that find expression in our heart? The answer is very clear: rebellion. And remember now, rebellion, the opposite of submission, is something that's in the heart. It may not come to expression in murder, it may not come to expression in inordinate anger and stealing and all these other kinds of things, but that is the fundamental problem with us and our heart and God knows this.

And if you doubt me on this, simply go back to the garden. Go back to the garden. What was Eve's sin? Everybody knows it. It was, first of all, she even listened to the devil. This is what the Bible means when it points out that Eve first sinned but what was Eve's first sin and it was this: she did not recognize the authority of her husband and thus that it was his duty and his job to protect his wife and talk to the devil. As soon as that talking snake showed up, Eve should have said, "No, something's wrong. I'm not going to handle this. I'm going to go get my husband." And there is a reason why the devil attacked Eve. It's not that she was naturally weaker, that's not what the apostle means by that. He's not implying that Eve was more prone to sin than Adam was even in their perfect state, but the devil recognized something about Eve and that was she was under the authority of Adam and there he attacked. He attacked right at that point, created a wedge between Eve and her husband and he wins the battle.

Then when you look at the temptation, what was the temptation essentially about? It was about honoring God. They were tempted with the thought of being their own boss. It was essentially this, "Do you really think it's in your best interest to listen to God? That commandment that God gave about not eating that tree seems a little overboard. I mean, look at the fruit. Do you really think God has your best interest at heart? I think God's holding out on you. I think, Eve and Adam, that God doesn't want you to be like him and what you need to do is rebel." In every one of our creeds, and every theologian that has ever looked at that issue has recognized that the essential issue in the garden was rebellion. Read the Belgic Confession sometime on this, or the Canons. That's how prone to this sin we are. It is our essential sin and it is the essential problem in who we are, and so when we get to the second table, this is the one God goes for. That's how important this is and it's fundamentally about submission.

So remember that next time God calls us to submit. I know that you women have that problem, you married women, and you read in the Bible and it's "wife submit," and I know that hits us. It's like, "Come on, we're one, we're both married in the Lord, we're equals. Why is God picking on me?" And the answer to that is he's not. He's not. God is simply pointing out a fact that by virtue of marriage the husband is head, and it's by virtue of marriage so that the Bible never has to tell the husband to be head. Never does scripture say that, "be your head." Never. You just are and the wife has to acknowledge that. That's why the Bible says that and it emphasizes it rather than "love your wife" because that will be the most important or most difficult thing for you to do. But remember this: God's not picking on you. We are all called to honor authority. In fact, it's quite amazing if you look at the scripture passages where you have the relationship of the husband and wife set forth, say in Ephesians 5 or elsewhere, 1 Peter 3. It's almost always connected with submission to all kinds of other authorities. In fact, if you look at Ephesians 5, the context of that is, "All of you submit one to another." That's an amazing thing. "You all submit one to another." You may look at that and say, "Well, why?" What that means is there's actually in a very real sense parents have to submit to their children. Whoa. Even a husband should submit to his wife in a very real sense, and we all, no matter who we are, how important we are, we all, in one way, submit to one another. And I'm not going to spend a lot of time on that, but it has to do with recognizing one another

as persons, that whether rich or poor, whether really smart or not so smart, whether I'm a child or whether I'm a parent, whether I'm a husband or a wife, we recognize that we are all in Christ.

So now when the Bible ever comes to us and says submit, it doesn't matter in what context it is, remember God says that to all of us, and that teaches us something very fundamental too about freedom. Freedom. Adam and Eve were free in the garden. They were free to serve God. They could do what we cannot do bound in sin. They could serve God. They could also sin but they could serve God. They were free. The Bible says partly the reason they fell is they didn't understand that freedom, but we have the same problem. We are free, God has bought us with a price, we are absolutely free and yet not absolutely. If you read the Bible very clearly, there is no freedom that we have that is absolute. It is always bound in some way. It always has some limit, some boundary. It is either limited by a husband/wife relationship, church/state relationship, or individual to the state, I mean. There is always that limit. There is no absolute freedom. We think there is and that's a great danger to us even when we're redeemed and bought. So I may say, "I am free," I must always acknowledge, "I'm not absolutely free."

We're going to see this in a little bit. I've been preaching on Christian liberty. I haven't got to these yet but there are quite the warnings when it comes to liberty. On the one hand, we have stand fast in your liberty, don't let anybody ever ever ever take your liberty away, and then the apostle seems to do that but what he's doing is explaining that every liberty we have is governed by some authority whether it's the neighbor so that there's instances where I have some liberty that I forbear, I give up for the sake of my neighbor. Or God. There are things that God neither commands nor forbids, there are Christian liberties and yet if you look very carefully, you'll discover God puts limits on that. You can't just buy whatever you want. You may think you can but you can't. And do whatever you want. No, you can't. This is all covered under submission.

Now we have to distinguish between submission and obedience in the second place because submission is unconditional, it is absolute. Obedience is conditional, that is, there's an exception to it. We have to understand that. There is never a time, there is never instance, there is never any time or any instance where you may not submit. And I mean that. There is never an instance or time when you are allowed to not submit to the government, to the church, to your husband, to your parents, to any authority. It is absolute in scripture. There is no exceptions and we'd better understand that because we have all kinds of them. We make them up all the time. And where it comes to expression is when it comes time to obey, doesn't it? Now what we've got to understand is we have these exceptions in our heart first, and if you examine them, you'll understand. "Why should I submit to the state? Or why should I not? I'm not going to submit to my parents. I'm not going to obey them. I'm not going to submit to the police. I'm not going to submit." And we always have an excuse or a reason, and I'm telling you there is no excuses and no reasons. Whether you disobey or obey, keep that out of sight now, we must always always always always recognize that they have authority from God. In other words, God is pleased to rule us by their hand.

Now normally we show submission and we acknowledge it by way of obedience. There's the connection. Submission is in the heart. Submission is an attitude. Submission is a knowledge. Submission is a recognition. It's inward. You're not going to see it except when it comes to expression, when it comes to action. And obedience or disobedience is where that happens and that is why there is one exception there but only one. Only one and I must emphasize this because we don't have more than one in our heart. The one exception is if that authority tells you to do something that God forbids, and it must be something that God forbids or they deny you something that God commands. In other words, if the state comes along and tells you no more having all the kids you want, you're limited to two, after that you abort them and throw them in the trashcan, then like Moses' parents, you have to say, "No. No. No. I may not do that, that's murder." The state may come along and say, "You may not worship." You say, "No. God tells me in the fourth commandment thou shalt worship. No, absolutely not." It doesn't matter, by the way, if it's covered by the first amendment or not, you say, "No." The state may have all kinds of rules and regulations that they send your way. You may disobey any of those that are contrary to God's word.

Now I emphasize that because you may not disobey those things just simply that you don't like nor may you say, "I'm going to disobey because, well, that authority is evil." Now those are the ones we always use. I can guarantee you and you know it in your heart, we see it in our children, we know it in ourselves, whenever we disobey, our excuse always is, "The authority is the problem." Isn't it? "I'm not going to listen to my parents because they are sinners. And I'm not going to listen to the state because they're wicked people. I'm not going to listen to Caesar because, well, he's killing Christians. I'm not going to listen to the state because that hurts me." None of those are valid in the eyes of God. None. Not a single one. Not a single one. There's only one exception to obedience and there are no exceptions for submission ever.

Now this is how God teaches us and rules us and that brings us to our second point that honoring authority is childlike. Again, God is wise and his wisdom is unsearchable. Why in the world did God give us this broad commandment and limit it to fathers and children? And there's a number of reasons for that. The first is because by this commandment God is reminding us of a wonderful wonderful covenant truth which is that children are included in the church and kingdom of God and often are at a very early age regenerated so that they can obey the commandments of God. Don't ever overlook that with this commandment. God comes to us in the commandments and reminds us, "I'm the God who saved you. I'm the God who delivered you from the bondage of Egypt." And then God in one commandment singles out children for a good reason: to remind all of us that children are included in the covenant as children. That's why, number 1. Don't ever forget it and don't forget to remind your children of that too when you're teaching this.

The second reason God sets this forth here this way is because this is where we learn submission. You don't learn submission as an adult ordinarily. You don't learn submission when you get to be an old person ordinarily. You learn it as a child. But keep in mind this is the commandment that determines all the others. This is the

commandment out of which all the others flow and what the Lord is saying here is this, "This is your fundamental duty as children and this is your fundamental duty as parents because this is where they will learn this important principle." On the one hand, this is your fundamental duty as parents and I am not overstating this. There are parents who think their fundamental duty with their children is all kinds of other things and it's easy to understand that because they are so needy, they need so many things. They need education. They need clothes. They need to learn orderliness. They need to learn how to clean up. They need to learn all these things and want to teach them all these skills, and so you can have a home where everything is in order, everything is right, everything is regulated, and the children are like that, and there's a certain wonder to that. You may have mothers who raise their children and the children are eating all the right foods at all the right times, and they're getting the right amount of sleep, homes where those children are well educated but there's one thing lacking and it will destroy both the children and the home. There's one thing, let me put it that way, you parents have one job and one job only when it comes to your children and that's to teach them to honor them and thus to teach them to honor all authority. That's it.

You can have a home, beloved, where this is taught wrongly. There are many many children that learn the wrong way about submission, that it's simply a matter of power and force, and they learn that because the father who often teaches this, well, it's the mother but often the father is a brute and a tyrant and a bully. What they teach the children is to submit because, "I say so"; to submit because, "I'm bigger than you"; to submit because, "I'm more powerful than you"; to submit because, "I can do things to you that hurt you." Don't ever do that. Yes, there are times to exercise a little muscle and a little discipline. Yes, there are times to say, "Do this just because I say so." But that's not teaching this commandment. This commandment has to be taught in love and often it's taught in very very subtle ways. The most important way it's taught is by how you honor authority in your home. Your home should be a home where authority is sacred, and not just yours, and even then when you talk about your authority, it's not about you. You don't just discipline your children because they disobeyed you and made you look bad. "No, that you dishonored God. God is speaking to you through me. God is leading you through me. God is teaching you through me."

It's a home where no authority is dishonored, where all authority is sacred, and I mean now not simply that we don't criticize and run into the ground authority in front of our children. Some of us think that that solves it. "I have something against the teacher and I have something against the school board and I have something against the consistory, and I have something against President Trump or Biden," whoever it will be, and you have enough sense in your head to withhold all that until the children are in bed. That's great. That's better than doing it in front of the children because I can tell you, if you do that in front of the children, you will raise rebels, you will raise rebels who will not listen and bow to any authority but themselves. I mean that, and if you have that, you have chaos, you have anarchy, you have every other sin of the second commandment. You will divide and rend and tear apart. But don't think that if you just do that all out of the earshot of your kids you've solved the problem. The problem still is in you. Why do you not recognize that authority? "Yeah, but they're not doing it right! They're not doing it the

way I want it! I have something to say here!" No, honor the authority. That's how it works. You all delegate authority to the consistory. That's how it works. And the husband is the authority in the house, and the state is the authority out there, and the policeman is the authority on the street and this is God's good pleasure.

So this is where your children will learn this. This is where your children will learn what it's all about and it's sad to say, it happens, parents raise rebels. Now they're always raising rebels, our children are rebels, that's why it's so important that it occur there. But it happens, the minister has to deal with a rebel, or the teacher has to deal with your rebel, and you can get all mad at the minister and the teacher about this or that but they can't do what only you can do. And I've had parents come to me just completely flabbergasted that their teenagers are now rebels, or that they just go here, there and everywhere when they get older, and all I can do is ask them questions about how they were raised and I know why it happened because in their home there was no respect for authority and those kids learned it. They learned it well. They learned it right from the horse's mouth and that is the inevitable result.

God also teaches us by putting this all down to children what submission, what honor of authority actually looks like. We forget this. We forget this especially as adults. Now I'm not talking to you children so much, I'm talking about us adults. Do you know what the problem is in us, what happens? We become adults and now we're in this sphere of authority, we're under a boss, we're under the state, we're under the consistory, and we forget something, that submission and honor to authority is childlike. What do I mean? What I want to do is to have you imagine you're a child before every authority that's over you. Now what does submission look like in your home? What does it look like? The answer is it's pretty absolute, isn't it? Pretty absolute. If you say to your child, "Child, you're coming home at 11 o'clock. It's the Sabbath day tomorrow." And that child pulls out this one on you, "Well, I have freedom. I have my liberty. My body and soul have been bought with the blood of Christ. You can't tell my body and soul what to do, mom and dad. I'm free in Christ." Do you know what you're going to say? "That may be true but just make sure you have your blood-bought body and soul back at 11 o'clock because I say so."

That's how it is, isn't it? We give our children some freedoms, don't we, and we don't bully them and that, but your authority is unquestioned, isn't it, in your home, and the reason why that is, is because you are indeed bigger than your kids, your children, and sometimes we make them know that, but it also shows how bad submission really is or lack of it thereof. Read the meditation of Calvin and what a monster a child is who will not honor the authority of his parents, and John Calvin shows do you realize that when you do that, you're not even recognizing you came from them, that they gave birth to you, that they've been changing your diapers and doing your dishes and cleaning up after you, and you dare say what you just said and do what you just did? We need to remember that. Whether it's in our marriage or whether it's any authority, do you know what they have done? Do you know what they are doing? Even a state when it's corrupt, what it brings because of God's authority in them? Even a church, same thing. For John Calvin, the

church was our mother. It is our mother. That's what Jesus said, the church is your mother. Treat it like your mother. Treat the state like your father.

That's what God is teaching. That's what we forget. We come up with all kinds of excuses but how well do they work in your own home? And the answer is they don't. You don't buy them. You remind them, "I'm the authority. I don't need a reason to have you home at 11 o'clock. I don't need to give you a reason why you're going to be out with that friend. I don't need a reason to tell you why you should go to bed. I don't need one. I'm your authority and God says remember that." When you get your hackles up and you get angry and bitter because this isn't what I want, this isn't how I would like it, this decision I'm against, that edict I'm not for, and you want to holler, "Freedom! Freedom! Liberty!" Just ask yourself how does it go in your own home?

Now the last point, beloved, that I'd like to make is that honoring authority is Christ-like. I bring this up because even in our redeemed and regenerated state, the notion of authority still gets us every time. We are rebels. Oh, we are rebels. It's in the depths of our soul and we need to recognize it. We will use every excuse in the book to defy it. We are like children even when adults. We bristle at being told what to do and so God reminds us again in this commandment as the God who bought us that submission is Christ-like. How important is submission? Well, in my eyes it's not really all that important. I mean, it would be nice if I submit and I will submit as long as, well, it's the way I want it. But I've got my exceptions, I've got my limits. We have all kinds of excuses to make it really not all that important. We take it from fifth commandment, we'll make it down to tenth, maybe just erase it altogether and make it completely conditional to our whim until you look at Christ. There's a reason why Titus connects this to Christ: Christ was the ultimate in submission. And I want to even say this, more importantly: and if he had not, there is no salvation. None.

Christ emphasized that himself. It is actually amazing, it is actually amazing how in his ministry Jesus, who is Lord, who is Christ, who is prophet, priest and king, never appealed to those. He could have. He was the prophet. He was the king. He was the Christ. But you don't see him running around saying, "Listen to me, I'm the Christ. Shut up, I'm the prophet, better do what I say." That's not what he did. He let people see it. But what did he say over and over again? "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. My meat, my food, that which makes me live is thy will." He obeyed his Father. He who is God's own Son obeyed when his Father said, "You're going to that cross and you're going to that cross for these rebels, for these people who will not respect authority, who could not even submit to me when they were perfect. You will go to that cross and you will submit. That's my will." What do you see? Do you see Jesus saying, "That's unreasonable. For those people? Are you kidding me? Go to the cross, suffer for sin? I'm perfect. Why should I die under thy wrath?" Even with his neighbor, oh yes, there were times when he flashed his authority and he called the Pharisees out, those wicked rulers, that was an exception, but he told the people, "You listen to what they say." He did. "Don't do what they do but listen to what they say." That's quite something coming from Jesus. He submits himself to the authority of the state. There he sits on trial by that pitiful, wicked, Roman ruler and allows himself to be put to the death, and if he had rebelled at any

moment, and he was aware of that, don't think he was coldhearted and didn't have a will himself. Look at him in the garden, the bloody sweat being pressed out of him and he's praying, what? He's praying what his will is, "Let this cup pass. Let it go away. I don't want that way myself. Nevertheless, thy will be done."

That's what you are when you submit. Don't ever forget that. It has nothing to do with whether you like that authority, whether you like their edicts or decrees. It's all about recognizing that God put them there as that authority, and when we do we are Christ-like. The other is devilish. It is sinful. It is wicked. Your own salvation depended on that in Christ and it's not too much for God then to come around to us and say, "Now you live that way. You live that way. You show that you're just not children and people in this world but you show that you're my children, my beloved." That, beloved, is honoring authority. Amen.

Let us pray.

O Lord our God and Father in heaven, keep us from rebellion and anarchy. Keep us, Lord, from that stubborn self-willed depraved nature that we have that is never wrong, always right, and would kick thee off the throne if it could as we have tried once already. The self-willed, proud, self-righteous individual that has a million excuses for disobeying and disregarding authority and who even when given authority abuses our own authority, we are sinners, Lord, that's all we are. As thy children, teach us to live like thy children, to recognize authority, to recognize thy authority in others and our calling to live in love and honor and fidelity toward one another in that way. This we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.