

## INTRODUCTION

This is the third Lord's Day in which the church is not meeting, during the coronavirus epidemic. Two weeks ago, I determined to preach and teach on truths that seemed to me particularly applicable to the church for living as disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ in this present crisis.

First, we considered together how our Lord Jesus Christ exhorts us not to worry, not to be anxious, not to be full of care regarding how we acquire our daily necessities, knowing that God is our creator and master, who feeds and clothes us as His creatures and His servants.

Then, we considered together how our Lord Jesus has taught us the Golden Rule, that whatever we would have men do to us, we do also to them, which is a brief, general commandment that teaches the same morality taught in all the scriptures. By the Golden Rule, we are helped to know what to do in any unfamiliar matters that come upon our consciences during these strange times.

Today, continuing with these devotional thoughts by which I can exhort you from the scriptures regarding life in this time of crisis, we consider the matter of how we deal with the government officials. Always we need to do the will of God regarding our rulers and authorities, regarding the "powers that be." But during this crisis, that need has become more acute than what we are used to. Indeed, the present situation, for many of us, is a crisis not because of the disease itself, but because of the orders that the government officials have been issuing in their attempts to limit the spread of the virus.

By the perfect wisdom of our God, the Lord Jesus Christ has specifically charged us who are the church's pastors with what to say to His disciples about relating to our government officials. So it has been my delight to study into this matter recently, refreshing myself with the apostles' familiar doctrine, that I might also refresh you with it today, for your guidance in the remainder of the present crisis.

## BODY

### I. The Pastor's Duty to the Church

A. It is my duty to speak to you the things that go with sound doctrine; the things that are becoming to wholesome doctrine; to teach what accords with sound doctrine (Titus 2:1)

1. the sound doctrine referred to is the truths that make up the gospel, considered both

a) what we believe God, by His grace, has done for us sinners through Jesus Christ and by the Holy Spirit (Titus 2:11), and

b) what we hope God will yet do for us in the future, when Jesus Christ comes again (Titus 2:13)

2. and those things the pastor must speak, must teach, that properly go with sound doctrine, have much to do with our relationships during this life, each of us according to his station in life

a) how the older men are to live

b) how the older women are to live, especially in relation to the younger women

c) how the younger women are to live, especially in relation to their husbands and children

d) how the young men are to live

e) how the pastor is to live, especially in the relation to the church

f) how servants are to live in relation to their masters

B. As I speak of these things to you, the disciples of Christ,

1. I am exhorting you, encouraging you to do the good that already you aspire to do, or even already are doing

2. if necessary, I also am rebuking you

a) if you are thinking of doing wickedly, or if you already are doing anything wicked

b) with all authority to do so given to me by our Lord Jesus Christ through His apostles

C. It is my duty to speak these things, exhorting and rebuking you, in the normal course of instruction, as you see that we do together week in and week out

D. But I perceive that the need for such exhorting and rebuking is more acute in times of crisis

1. when there are greater pressures on us than in more pleasant times
    - a) because of the direct effects of an epidemic, or a war, or a famine, or a natural disaster
    - b) because of additional the indirect effects of such things
  2. when other people with whom we relate might not be acting as they usually do
    - a) maybe they are acting good, but just doing thing they don't usually do in normal times, and we have to deal with that
    - b) maybe they are acting bad, worse than usual, and we have to deal with that
- E. In speaking these kinds of things to you, declaring them to you, exhorting and if necessary convincing or rebuking you with all authority, it is particularly my duty to remind you or put you in mind or put you in remembrance of your duty regarding the government (Titus 3:1)
1. the Christian needs to have his duty toward the government in his mind
    - a) always, but
    - b) especially in times of crisis, when the government officials do not just do as they always do, but do things we are not used to them doing
  2. but you might not have your duty toward the government in your mind right now; maybe you
    - a) know it well already,
      - (1)but have forgotten it
      - (2) but have not been thinking about it
      - (3) and have been thinking about it, but not in light of God's grace and the gospel of salvation in Jesus Christ
    - b) do not know it well,
      - (1)because you never learned it
      - (2) because you learned some distorted idea of it
  3. so the Lord's apostle told us who teach and preach to put you in mind of your duty related to the government

That, then, is the pastor's duty toward the church, which duty I am happily engaged in right now, as I put you in mind that

- II. The Church's Main Duty to the Government Authorities Is To Be Subject to Them (Titus 3:1)
- A. Note this as the first line in apostolic instruction on this subject
1. Romans 13:1
  2. 1 Peter 2:13
  3. Titus 3:1
- B. I warn you not to skip over this first, primary, most important line, in the interest of pursuing exceptions to this rule
1. it is true that there is more to the bible's doctrine of dealing with government authorities than just this rule; the bible teaches us that if the government authorities command something that is clearly against what God commands, we do not obey them on that point
    - (1) if the government officials require something God prohibits, you do not obey; e.g. the Hebrew midwives
    - (2) if the government officials prohibit something that God requires, you do not obey; e.g. the Sanhedrin with Peter and John
  2. but do not skip over the apostolic rule for us, the disciples of Jesus Christ, excusing yourself from learning it and having it in mind and obeying it
  3. I lean on this point so strongly because I have felt the temptation in myself, because I have heard it in the words of other Christians many times over the years, and because the bible makes a very similar point
    - a) 1 Peter 2:16
    - b) we may be tempted to use the doctrine of Christian liberty as a cloak or cover-up behind which what we actually are doing is refusing to be mindful of and obey the Lord's rule for us, that we submit to the government authorities
  4. if you have been doing that, or if you are doing it now, I rebuke you for it with the authority given me according to the word of God
- C. Consider what it means to be subject to the government authorities
1. Greek word *hypotasso*
    - a) compound: under + arrange
    - b) arrange yourself under
  2. English words used to translate
    - a) be subject

- (1) see in our English word the latin “sub” which we know means “under”
- (2) see in our English word “subject” the root “ject”
  - (a) inject means to put something in
  - (b) project means to put something forth or forward
  - (c) subject means to put something under
- (3) to be subject means to put yourself under
- b) submit or be submissive
  - (1) see in our English word “submissive” or “submission” the relationship with words such as “missile” or “mission” indicating sending or releasing
    - (a) submission means releasing or sending something to be under
    - (b) to submit yourself is to release or send yourself to be under
  - (2) ESV uses “submissive” here
    - (a) ESV translates same word “be subject” in Rom 13:1, 1 Pe 2:13
    - (b) I don’t agree that the rule is to be “submissive;” instead, the rule is actually to submit, to be subject

### 3. biblical concept

- a) God has arranged human society, with positions of being over and being under
  - (1) some of those relationships are from creation
  - (2) some are by God’s kind government of us even in our sinful state
- b) examples
  - (1) husbands are over; wives are under
  - (2) parents are over; children are under
  - (3) masters are over; servants are under
  - (4) pastors are over; church members are under
  - (5) government officials are over; everyone who lives in their jurisdiction is under
- c) by God’s ordination, those positions are arranged that way
- d) by God’s providence, certain people occupy those positions

- e) when you learn what your position is in God's arrangement, to be subject, to submit, is to act as is appropriate to your position toward those whose position is over yours

D. This applies to government officials at every level

1. in the Roman Empire
  - a) the Roman emperor
  - b) the local rulers of various kinds
2. in these United States of America
  - a) the federal government, especially in the person of the president
  - b) the state government, especially in the person of the governor
  - c) the county government, especially in the person of the county judge
  - d) the city government, especially in the person of the mayor

The pastor's duty toward the church, which duty I am happily engaged in right now, is to put you in mind that the church's main duty to the government authorities is to be subject to them

Now see how we act out that subjection or submission; in the somewhat specific terms that describe

### III. The Church's Performance of That Duty

#### A. We obey

1. we refrain from what the government prohibits
2. we do what the government requires
3. it is a given that government officials, being imperfect, will give imperfect orders
4. it is a given that we will lose something in this obedience that we do not want to lose
  - a) money
  - b) time

#### B. We stay ready for every good work

1. those that we always do
2. those that are sometimes required of us by government orders

#### C. We blaspheme no one, but instead are gentle

1. I had to repent of the sin of blaspheming government officials back a few years ago
  - a) that's why you now hear me saying, "our previous governor"
  - b) that's why I took to saying, "the person living in the white house referring to himself as 'Barack Obama'"
2. I am sorry for what still remains in my thoughts and words like that
  - a) right now I am tempted to blaspheme former VP Joe Biden
  - b) I'm frequently tempted to blapheme our former county judge, Spanky Carter
3. I certainly do not want to be blasphemed; may the Lord help me not to do that to others

#### D. We do not fight, but instead are meek toward all

1. we are willing to fight, but not eager to fight
  - a) it is a great tragedy not to fight when it is time to fight
    - (1) history teaches us that even the righteous must sometimes fight in a civil war or a war for independence
  - b) but it is a great tragedy also to fight when it is not time to fight
    - (1) let us not misuse our knowledge of history, by adopting a mindset that it is virtuous to be eager to fight

- (2) remember with tears Peter, who slept instead of fighting spiritually in prayer, then fought instead of submitting physically
2. we meekly receive slights or injuries or insults
  - a) neither fretting ourselves nor taking revenge
  - b) turning the other cheek
  - c) counting on the Lord to set things right in His way at His time

The pastor's duty toward the church, which duty I am happily engaged in right now, is to put you in mind that the church's main duty to the government authorities is to be subject to them

Having seen how we act out that subjection or submission, in the somewhat specific terms that describe the church's performance of that duty, now consider

#### IV. God's Grace, Which Motivates the Performance of Our Duty

- A. We acknowledge how sinful we used to be - Titus 3:3
- B. We remember how, when we were still sinners, the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared to us, as He saved us not by any works of righteousness we have done, but according to His mercy - Titus 3:4-5a
  1. He washed us by a pouring out His Holy Spirit abundantly on us through Jesus Christ our Savior; this has produced the effect that we are now regenerated and renewed - Titus 3:5-6
  2. He justified us by His grace; this has produced the effect that we are now heirs with hope of eternal life
- C. If God has dealt so kindly with us when we were still sinners, can we not deal kindly with others?
- D. If God has dealt with us in love, can we not deal with others in love?
- E. If God has dealt with us not according to our works, by according to mercy, can we not deal with others in mercy?
- F. If God has given us a sure hope of blessed eternal life, as heirs of all things, can we not hold the things of this world loosely, not clutching them tightly to ourselves, but being willing to release them if necessary, knowing that anything we are called on to lose in this world for Christ's sake, He will repay many times over in the world to come



## CONCLUSION

Let us, then, in kindness, in mercy, and in love, submit ourselves, make ourselves subject, to the government authorities during this time of crisis. Let us obey them, as we would want to be obeyed did we have their positions of responsibility. Let us refrain from blaspheming them, as we would want them also to refrain from speaking evil of us. Let us not be eager to fight them or anyone else, but be peaceable toward all men, meekly looking to the Lord Jesus to defend us, and to set everything right when He returns.

<b>Titus 3:1</b>	<b>Romans 13:1-8</b>	<b>1 Peter 2:13-17</b>
G5293 <i>hupotasso</i> KJV be subject	G5293 <i>hupotasso</i> KJV be subject	G5293 <i>hupotasso</i> KJV submit yourselves
G746 <i>arche</i> KJV principalities	G758 <i>archon</i> KJV rulers	G935 <i>basileus</i> KJV king
	G5242 <i>huperecho</i> KJV higher	G5242 <i>huperecho</i> KJV supreme
G1849 <i>exousia</i> KJV powers	G1849 <i>exousia</i> KJV powers	G2937 <i>ktisis</i> ordinance
		G2232 <i>hegemon</i> KJV governors
G3980 <i>peitharcho</i> G3982 <i>peitho</i> + G757 <i>archo</i> KJV obey magistrates		
	KJV the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil  G4238 <i>prasso</i> G2556 <i>kakos</i> KJV him that doeth evil	KJV them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers  G2555 <i>kakopios</i> KJV evildoers
G2092 <i>hetoimos</i> KJV ready		
G18 <i>agathos</i> G2041 <i>ergon</i> KJV good work	G18 <i>agathos</i> G2041 <i>ergon</i> KJV good works	G17 <i>agathopios</i> KJV them that do well
	G5092 <i>time</i> KJV honour (to whom honor)	G5091 <i>timao</i> KJV honor (the king)

JRY:

Here is instruction being given to pastors. As the pastor hears this instruction, the church hears it, too, and so knows what they should expect. If the pastor does, in fact, remind them of the things the apostle said they should, they know he is being faithful, and they should heed what he is telling them. If the pastor does not remind them of those things, or especially if he says something contradictory to that, they can know he is not being faithful, and they should question what he is saying.

So, what you are to do during the present crisis, in relation to the government officials.

- I. Be Subject To Them
  - A. In the Greek the same word every time
  - B. Rendered in English
    1. be subject
    2. submit yourselves
    3. be submissive
  - C. Submit to these men for the Lord's sake
    1. they are sent by Him (1 Pe 2:14)
    2. they have their power, their authority from God
    3. they are God's servants
  - D. Obey instead of resisting
  - E. Obey both the highest rulers and the lower rulers
    1. 1 Pe 2:13-14
    2. e.g. the president, the governor, the county judge, the mayor
  - F.
- II. Pay Them Their Taxes
  - A. They have the right to exact them
  - B. Our Lord Jesus said to do so
- III. Honor Them
  - A. Honor is due
- IV. Whatever You Would Have Them Do to You, Do Likewise to Them
- V. Pray for Them

