

“The Grace of Authority”
Titus 3:1
(Preached at Trinity, April 30, 2023)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. As we enter **Chapter 3** Paul charges Titus to instruct these Christians on being good citizens and good neighbors. The charge in **Verse 1** is brief but abundantly clear.
Titus 3:1 NAU - "Remind them to be subject to rulers, to authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good deed"
2. Paul’s words implies these Christians had already been taught on their duty to obey their rulers – **“Remind them to be subject . . .”**
Most likely Paul had instructed them earlier when he and Titus were on the island. Paul is charging Titus to remind them.
3. Our duty of submission to our civil authorities is repeated several times in the New Testament. Paul spent the better part of **Romans 13** on this subject. Also in **1 Timothy 2**, and now here in **Titus 3**. Peter wrote on it in **1 Peter 2**.
Jesus also gave clarity on the subject:
Matthew 22:21 NAU - "Then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's; and to God the things that are God's."
4. God has delegated authority upon the earth and commands us to be in subjection.
Romans 13:1 NAU - "Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities."
Few see authority as a grace from God. It is necessary in our fallen world. God has ordained it for our good.
This whole idea of submission is most difficult for human beings. We naturally resist authority. This is why children resist the authority of their parents. It’s why wives find it so difficult to submit to the leadership of their husbands. It’s why leadership in the church is often resisted. And why people find themselves justified in disregarding the laws established by their leaders. I once preached a sermon on civil authority from Romans 13 and a member of the congregation became very angry. I basically just read the text, but he didn’t like being told to obey the government.
Romans 13:1 NAU - "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."
5. Paul is charging Titus to stress the importance of submission to authority.
What does Paul mean by authority in this passage? Dictionary definition:
“the power or right to control, judge, or prohibit the actions of others.”
Another basic definition of authority is “the power one has to demand obedience.”
Paul uses the words “rulers” and “authorities” synonymously.
It is the right to command.

- I. The first thing we need to understand is there is but one absolute and sovereign authority upon the earth. God rules over all of His creation.
- A. True authority has two elements:
1. One is the power to rule—the power to make demands; to impose one’s will upon another.
 2. The other is the right to rule. In other words, it is legitimate authority. A person holding a gun to your head may have the power to impose his will upon you but he doesn’t have the right.
- B. God has both the power and right to govern the actions of men. All human beings must submit to His authority.
1. God is infinite in all His being.
Human beings are infinitely small as we stand before Him. As we consider the greatness and majesty of God it should cause us to fall on our faces before Him.
 2. God has the power to impose His will but He also has the right. He is the Creator. He has the right to impose His will upon that which He owns
- C. Our duty as human beings is to bow down and submit to His authority.
1. God says, “Thou shalt have no other God’s before me.”
 2. This means that God is supreme. Nothing can compare with Him. There is no authority higher than His authority.
 3. Another word used to describe God’s authority is “sovereignty”
 4. The greatest tragedy of man is that he hates the authority of God. All sin is rebellion – all sin is calling into question His authority.
- D. The greatest manifestation of God’s authority upon the earth is Jesus Christ
1. In His work as our Redeemer Jesus purchased dominion over all things.
Philippians 2:9 NAU - "For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name,"
Matthew 28:18 NAU - "And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth."
 2. The ultimate authority upon this earth is the authority of Christ
Colossians 1:18-19 NAU - "He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything. ¹⁹ For it was the *Father's* good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him,"
 3. Jesus possesses all authority - All men must bow before Him
Psalms 2:12 KJV – "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish *from* the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed *are* all they that put their trust in him."

- II. Jesus Christ possesses all authority, but God has delegated other authority upon the earth to serve as the agents and servants of Christ. This authority we must also obey.
Exodus 22:28 NAU – “You shall not curse God, nor curse a ruler of your people.”
- A. God has ordained that all men upon the earth live under authority.
1. All authority on earth is delegated authority.
 - a. Jesus said to Pilate:
John 19:11 NAU - "Jesus answered, "You would have no authority over Me, unless it had been given you from above"
 - b. This is the essence of the texts commanding us to obey authorities.
Romans 13:1 NAU - "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."
Titus 3:1 NAU - "Remind them to be subject to rulers, to authorities, to be obedient"
 2. God has not purposed anarchy or absolute self-rule.
 God has placed all men under authority – and we must obey the authority God has established.
 This is the essence of the Fifth Commandment – we are born under the authority of our parents.
 3. We are to obey earthly authority because God commands it – to reject earthly authority is to reject God. The exception, of course, is when man’s laws are in conflict with the Law of God.
Acts 5:29 NAU - "But Peter and the apostles answered and said, "We must obey God rather than men."
- B. We can divide this delegated authority into several categories. Paul’s charge here in **verse 1** has civil authority as the primary focus but should be applied to other forms of authority.
1. There is Familial authority
 - a. Children are to obey their parents
Ephesians 6:1 NAU - "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right."
 - b. Wives are to submit to their husbands
Ephesians 5:22 NAU - "Wives, *be subject* to your own husbands, as to the Lord."
 - c. We submit to those in authority as we submit to Christ
 2. God commands obedience to civil authorities
Romans 13:1 NAU - "Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities.
 Again Peter writes
1 Peter 2:13-15 NAU - "Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority, ¹⁴ or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right. ¹⁵ For such is the will of God that by doing right you may silence the ignorance of foolish men."

3. Ecclesiastical authority
 - a. The church has authority as it speaks with one voice.
Matthew 18:18 NAU - "Truly I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven."
 - b. The church does not operate as a democracy.
1 Timothy 5:17 NAU - "The elders who rule well are to be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching."
- C. Why has God ordained authority?
 1. Authority is a means of restraining evil
 2. God's restraining grace is a wonderful grace. No man is as wicked as his heart is capable of leading him.
 - a. We think of wicked men like Hitler or serial killers or child abusers and we shudder at their cold blooded evil.
 - b. We read about torture and death in the most cruel manner and we turn away in repulsion.
 - c. The truth is none of this is as bad as we are capable of committing and you and I personally would exceed all wickedness except for God's restraining grace.
 3. God uses many means to restrain the sinfulness of men.
 - a. He has written His Law upon our hearts and given us a conscience.
 - b. God rules over the hearts of men restraining us from much of the evil we are capable of
Proverbs 21:1 NAU - "The king's heart is *like* channels of water in the hand of the LORD; He turns it wherever He wishes."
 - c. And certainly, His providential dominion upon the earth removes much of the opportunity for men to carry out the full measure of their depravity.
Proverbs 16:9 NAU - "The mind of man plans his way, But the LORD directs his steps."
 - d. Apart from this grace the world would be the most vile place to live. Human beings would quickly destroy one another.
 - e. Civil authority is essential in this fallen world.

III. Submission to authority is always hard

- A. In our fallen state we desire absolute independence and autonomy.
 1. Sin has left men with a hatred of authority – All authority. We cringe at the word “submit”
 2. Even the believer resists submission
 3. The reason men disregard God is they hate His authority
Exodus 22:28 NAU – “You shall not curse God, nor curse a ruler of your people.”
- B. We need to seek to have submissive hearts.
 1. Learning to be under authority teaches us how to be under God's authority. Children should be taught this as parents demand their respect. It should reflect our duty before God.

2. We need to pray that God will help us to be submissive.
3. We need to pray that God will give us a servant's heart. Our problem with submission is we want to be king. There is only one true King.
4. Jesus is our King. If He commands us to submit to the earthly authority which He has ordained we must bow.
5. We need to remember that God has ordained earthly authority for our good.
 - a. It is good for children to obey their parents. Parents have been given for their good
Ephesians 6:2-3 NAU - "Honor your father and mother (which is the first commandment with a promise), ³ that it may be well with you, and that you may live long on the earth."
 - b. It is good for us to obey the civil authorities
Romans 13:3-4 NAU - "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."

Conclusion:

1. God has placed all men under authority. All of us must have submissive hearts. The nature of Christian conversion is a heart of meekness and humility.
2. Christians should be model citizens. If at all possible, we should seek to submit to the laws of our government. We must never forget that our chief allegiance is to God.
Acts 5:29 NAU - "But Peter and the apostles answered and said, "We must obey God rather than men."
 This faithfulness to God may lead to persecution. God is our chief motivation for all that we do.