

# (Titus - Part 23): Christian Subjection to Government

by A.W. Tozer

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*Christians have a duty to obey the state, but also have the freedom to choose between obeying the state or God when their laws conflict, and should strive to be a positive influence on society by being obedient to God's law.*

**Duration:** 29:28

**Scripture:** Titus 3:3

**Topics:** "Titus"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of Christians actively engaging in doing good works. He encourages believers to be responsive to the needs of others and to be generous with their resources. The preacher also highlights the significance of humility and meekness, reminding Christians not to forget their own past mistakes and shortcomings. He urges the congregation to show compassion and understanding towards others, as they too were once foolish, disobedient, and enslaved to their own desires. Overall, the sermon emphasizes the example set by Jesus in going about doing good and encourages believers to follow in his footsteps.

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## Transcript

Paul was nothing of the sort. One of the most practical men in the world was Paul. He said, they don't work, neither shall they eat.

He disposed of all tramps that way. And here he said, put them in mine. Now that's an old English idiom which is at least 400 years old or older because it had been accepted in good literary English 350 years ago, therefore it must have been around at least another 50, so at least 400 years, put them in mine.

It's passing out now and we use it very little, but I don't know whether it's just age or rigidity, but I hate to see some of these grand old phrases go out. We've not, if we could find something better, but usually we settle for something worse. Put them in mine.

My father used to say, put me in mine to do so and so, lest he'd forget it. You don't hear it much now. We say now, remind me.

It's easier and it's perhaps a little smoother, but put people in mine. Paul said, put them in mine. The Christians have to be put in mind of things.

I told you about the man who stood in this pulpit, not under my auspices, but at a convention and declared that churches ought not to meet like this, that their business is to go out, go out, always go out. He said, we meet every Sunday and do the same old thing. He said, the Bible doesn't say, candle my eggs.

It said, feed, he said, no, he said, the Bible candles, sends us out. He said, what did you think of a chicken raiser that candled his eggs and then put him back in the box and candled him the next week and put him back and candled him again? And it sounded unanswerable, but it was too neat to be true and I knew it. So I looked it up and I found the Bible didn't say anything about candling eggs, but it did say an awful lot about feeding sheep.

And feeding sheep is something you have to keep doing. You can't just feed the sheep and now say, you're fed, we're on your way. He has to be fed again and again led into deep pastures.

So this putting people in mind of things is feeding the sheep. They make fun of us and call us psalm singers. They used to call them psalm singers in England and say, these psalm singers.

They were impractical, but them psalm singers that they made so much fun of, conquered continents and built cities and did wonders and exploits and all that. I was talking to Dr. Hunter, editor of Evangelical Christian, the great Canadian magazine. He was there the week I was there and we were discussing this and that.

He was talking about the British troops under, I never can think of the fellow's name. No, back there in the days of Charles. Cromwell, thank you, sir.

Thank you. It's funny, that name slips out of my mind. My mother must have been frightened by something like that prenatally.

But anyway, he talked about Cromwell's troops. He said they won, they never lost. They won, he said, they knifed through their enemies like a knife through cheese.

Because they prayed and expected to win. They weren't weaklings. They were strong men.

Now, God's people have to be put in mind practically to live right. Put them in mind to be subject to principalities. Subject to principalities and powers.

That means to the state, of course. Not to the state of Illinois, but thinking as the word is used in civics. The organized state, organized society.

And he said that Christians are to be subject to. That is to obey the state. Now, it is the Christian's sacred duty to be obedient to the state.

To the authorities over him. And it is his sacred duty, if those laws are evil. It is his sacred duty to break them and take the consequences.

It is the sacred duty of all Christians to obey God first and man second. And when, as I've pointed out before. When the instructions of God and the laws of men run parallel to each other.

And they mostly do in law. Then it's the business of the Christian to obey the law, even if it costs him something. But when they run counter to each other, it's the business of the Christian to obey God.

Break the law and take the consequences. Every Christian ought to be a potential rebel. Keep that in mind.

He may, he's not a rebel, but he's a potential rebel. He could be. He could be a rebel.

If it became, for instance, a law. God forbid it ever should. I hope we'll all be in heaven before that could ever happen in America.

But if it's a law should ever be passed. That we could not read our Bibles nor pray. Why it would be our business to break the law and take the consequence.

Read our Bibles and pray. But as long as the laws are just. And I say mostly they are under Anglo-Saxon laws.

We are of the Anglo-Saxon people. Mostly the laws are completely just. I do not believe that there is a law in the city of Chicago.

Which to keep would require that you disobey God. If there is a law, I don't know. Some people think the income tax is a law.

That is evil. And perhaps it is evil economically. But it isn't evil morally.

It could be that the income tax. Getting heavier and heavier and heavier. Particularly on corporations.

Destroying the very root and fountain of economic life. It could be that it's an evil economically. But it is not an evil morally.

Therefore pay your income tax and like it. If you can have grace enough. But if you don't have grace enough to pay them and like it, pay them.

Whether you like it or not. Now I say again, I don't think there is a law. I don't know of a law in the United States.

That would require me to break God's law. But if and when, as they say. That time comes, I'll break the laws of my country.

Without a question. I am a Christian first and an American second. And every Christian should take that position.

He should be a Christian first. And then after that an American, if he's in America. And if the laws of America should ever get twisted around.

And say you've got to do this evil thing. You say we've got to obey God rather than men. Peter set that example.

But if there are immoral laws in our country. Then we ought not to keep them. Now the Christian is free.

But he's not lawless. The Lord's dear people are like sheep. And sheep aren't too intelligent.

And we as a rule are not spiritually enlightened. The PhD, the man with the brilliant mind. Is nevertheless stupid when it comes to spiritual things.

The things of the spirit of God are spiritually discerned. And you can have the best education modern society affords. And you can have an IQ of 150.

And still be terribly stupid when it comes to spiritual things. Because that requires enlightenment from above. Enlightenment of the Holy Ghost.

Sometimes I pick up a book written by some very brilliant man. Who's known around the world for his brilliance. And then he puts in a paragraph or two or maybe a chapter about Christianity.

And I shake my head and say how can a man be that dumb? He does not understand spiritual things. But he's very brilliant in other things. Quite natural it should be that way.

Seeing that there are two kingdoms coexisting. The kingdom of man and the kingdom of God. They coexist and in some measure they even intermingle.

And yet one is above the other. And we live in the kingdom of God rather than the kingdom of man. So the Christian is free but he's not lawless.

And I say it's very hard for us to make the distinction. If we preach the Christian is free. Then everybody shouts well the Christian is free.

And starts acting like an anarchist. Never. He is free but he's never lawless.

He's perfectly willing to play the game according to the rules of the game. He does not insist upon making the rules as he goes along. And he does not insist upon breaking them if he doesn't like them.

Now a righteous government never needs to fear a Christian. You can be sure of that. A just government with just laws never needs to be afraid of a Christian.

But down through history unjust governments have had to be afraid of Christians. The emperors of Rome became afraid of the Christians. They were multiplying too fast.

They were afraid of them. The first example of it was when the wise men came from the east saying where is he that is born king of the Jews? And they called the seminary faculty together. And they said you are prophetic students.

Where is the Christ to be born? And they knew. They went right to the verse and chapter. And they said he is to be born in Bethlehem of Judah for thus it is written.

And the old king heard about that and he got scared. He said a king of the Jews has arisen now. And he sent his men down to kill all the little babies under two years hoping that he could destroy this potential rival in his cradle.

But he missed him. The Lord had given a dream to old Stodgy Joseph. Brother McAfee and I don't agree.

We're friendly disagreeing over Joseph. He thinks Joseph was a very wonderful fellow, and I think Joseph just merely made it. But he was a good, faithful husband of Mary.

Then the way the angel came and he told Joseph what to do. And Joseph took Jesus where he was safe. He missed it, but he tried.

Can't say he didn't try. He was afraid of Jesus. And that was the first.

And all down the years, evil men have been afraid of the Church. You remember how Hitler tried to squelch the Church? He was afraid of the Church. And Stalin tried to squelch the Church.

Incidentally, do you know what they're doing now in Russia? They are adopting Christian forms, and they are baptizing people into Communism. I have been saying that Communism is the devil's Christianity. It runs parallel to Christianity in so many ways, but just upside down.

Christianity came down from above, and Communism came up from hell. But strangely enough, they were alike. Jesus, the Christ, came down from above.

The Antichrist comes up from hell. And yet the Antichrist has to be so much like Christ that he can fool people. And the fact that there is similarity doesn't mean there is identity.

And Communism is today similar to early Christianity. You can find many, many parallels. Even Communism is seeing that now.

And I have been reading about how they come and dedicate their babies to Communism. And go through a form. Have a dedication service.

Baptize. They don't only use water, but they go through some form giving them over to Communism. Well, Communists are afraid of the Christians.

Always the need to be afraid of the Christians. Because a Christian is always a potential enemy of the state as soon as the state goes to the devil. But as long as the state is just and its laws are righteous, no state ever needs to be afraid of a Christian.

He'll pay his taxes. He'll keep the laws. He'll be obedient.

He'll be decent. He'll teach others to be decent. Why, if Uncle Sam only knew it, as the dear lady wrote to General Pershing during World War I, they say, I don't know what happened, but they said she wrote a very sharp letter about her husband who was in the service.

And she said, if you don't do something about it, I'll take it up with Uncle Sam himself. And if Uncle Sam himself only knew how much trouble we keep him out of by our churches, they wouldn't require any of us Christians to pay taxes. They'd say, oh, you've done your part.

You Christians have already done your part. You have set a good example of obedience and law-keeping and righteousness and decency and hard work and frugality and generosity. And your influence is so strong for righteousness that we will at least exempt you.

They'll never get around to that. But I wish they would. I'd enjoy getting exempted.

Amen. But they won't. But they could because we've already done it.

The Church has already done a tremendous lot. And you know they do recognize it. They don't charge us tax on this corner.

They do recognize that. They do recognize that the Church has a value. It does have a value in society.

And the Church is never an enemy of a righteous government, but is a potentially dangerous enemy of a government that is not righteous. And when Russia, her terrible bloody teeth are finally pulled loose from the necks of a third of the world, it may be religious people that do it. Now, he said, be obedient.

Put them in mind, he said. Keep reminding them, otherwise they'll forget it. They get busy with their work and they'll forget it.

But obey magistrates. Now, it's one thing to be told to obey the king or the president. It's quite another to be told to obey a magistrate, that is, a policeman, a constable, somebody you don't think has too much authority.

You're driving through a little town and a country policeman comes out. It's rather humorously pathetic that the one class of people who have the reputation for being the most reckless drivers on our continent are the preachers. I rode down from Muskoka Lakes to the airport about a hundred miles, about 120 miles from Toronto, but the airport they tell me is 20 miles out of Toronto, so we stopped short and I flew down, but about a hundred miles.

And the driver, a good Christian brother, I wanted to get in there because I hadn't my ticket yet, and I wasn't sure I could get it, and I was anxious to get there ahead of time. And I'd look at his speedometer and wonder, what's he loafing along here for? He had a big billet, and why is he loafing along? Bless my heart, always that red line. You know, the red line runs out telling you, like a thermometer, on its line on its side, that type of car.

And I'd look down, see the red line, and it was on 55 or 65 or 45, corresponding to the signs along the way. This good man would rather keep the Canadian laws than get me to the airport on time. I'd rather have missed the plane than to have broken the law.

And we joke about that. Let me tell you, don't joke about disobeying the Holy Ghost. If they put a 20-mile zone or a 20-mile law in this city, go out there and creep along 20 miles, rather than be caught disobeying the laws of man and claim to be a Christian.

And they say, oh, you're a Christian, huh? Well, \$10 in cost. Well, then it says to be ready to every good work. Now, that's so broad in general that I won't even attempt to apply it, only to say two things.

The Christian should be the first one to respond to a need, whatever the need is. And he should be the most generous with his means and the quickest to help. He shouldn't be afraid to get out and make himself useful.

Jesus went about doing good, and I think, as such, it was an example to us all. He went about doing good. There's grave danger that we become ivory tower Christians, that we have servants and that somebody else does our work for us.

I think it would be good, Emerson said, it's good for everybody to take their shoes off occasionally and get out and walk around in the ground. He said there's something good and healing in the earth, and everybody ought to get down and walk around on his bare feet in the earth. We kids, when I was a boy, used to go barefooted through the unpaid roads, and they would beat up with the passage of the traffic, and get dust, dust, and to feel the dust go through your toes.

Oh, it was a pleasure that's very good. You'd have to pay \$25 to have that much fun in Chicago, but it didn't cost a dime out on the road. Just walk through there and just feel Mother Earth sort of taking hold of your feet.

That was a pleasure. Well, God's people ought not ever to get too far from the Mother Earth and the sweet ground out of which they were taken. If your spirit were to leave your body, and we were to reduce you back to your component elements, the earth could claim every bit of you, every bit of you, and say you don't own a thing, this belongs to me, you got it from me.

So we ought not to get too far away from the earth. I don't mind shaking hands with a man with some calluses. I think they'd do us good to get a few calluses.

Usually we pay our way out. We got money and an indisposition to do anything practical, and if there's a need arises, we give money, but don't do anything. He says be ready to every good work.

Then he says speak evil of no man and don't be a brawler. I don't suppose I need to tell you Christians not to be brawlers, and I don't think I need to tell you to speak evil of no man. I find you a pretty close-mouthed people, and I am proud of you on that.

There's not much speaking evil of people going on around here. As a writer and preacher, I probably do the most, but I don't speak evil because I don't like people, but I speak, I trust as a prophet, rebuking and exhorting, and it's not evil, although some might call it that. It's rebuking people and pointing to their faults.

Well, then he says be gentle and showing meekness to all men. Now why? Why should a Christian go about gentle and meek? Well, he said the reason is that you mustn't forget who you were once. You yourself was once foolish and disobedient and deceived and a slave to lusts and pleasures, living in malice and hate and endless, and hating each other.

He said, why should you be too hard on people? Look who you used to be. And who is there here that can say it's not so? Anybody here above the age of 18 that can say there wasn't a time when I was foolish? Anybody here that can say there never was a time in my life that I was disobedient? Anybody here? Anybody here say there wasn't a time that I wasn't deceived? Anybody here say there never was a time in my life that I was a slave to pleasures and lusts of the flesh? Anybody here can say there never was a time I felt any malice or hated anybody? If you say it and you're above 18, you may be honest, but your memory's bad. Because it's human nature, human nature, to be filled with malice and hate.

Go out on the school grounds any time. I like to walk past the school ground if it's fenced in, just at recess time, and watch them. They seem to all be screaming at the same time.

Why, I wouldn't know. But all at the same time. Dashing about, and suddenly over here in the corner you'll see a little scuffle, two little guys who stick their chins out and cuss each other out in boyhood blasphemy.

Hateful and hating one another. I remember when I was a young fellow that a fellow bigger than I was laid a hold on me and started wrestling me down. I completely lost my head.

Pulled loose from him, and being a farmer, and being a Pennsylvania farmer, I did the most appropriate and most normal thing. I raced for a rock pile. And I picked up rocks, and when the barrage was over, he was a very tame fellow.

I threw rocks, and you know, brother, you're a country boy in the rock. You know, if they only knew it, they could take the average country boy and put him in there, and you could out pitch Billy Pierce, because they just throw rocks in time they're big enough to lift one. I remember that.

Hateful and hating one another. Full of malice. I'd have killed that fellow just as sure, only I just ran out of strength.

Well, in this, in this. Why did you buy that new 1958? Was it by any means that you needed smoother transportation, or because the fellow across the street had one? In this. That's why, my brethren, why should we be gentle with each other when we fall? Because we still have bumps and purple spots from where we fell.

Forget that. Keep that in mind. Never take a holier-than-thou attitude.

They accuse us of it. They say that we take where we think we're holier than they are. But that's because they don't know us.

The man who thinks he's better than others isn't a true Christian man yet. And the man who despises even the poorest and the lowest isn't a good Christian man yet. Maybe on his way, but he hasn't made it yet.

For the true Christian never sees a murderous picture in the paper but what he says, there go I but by the grace of God. And he never sees a tramp sitting on a park bench, bleary-eyed in a semi-coma, staring at the gravel walk, but what he says, there am I but by the grace of God. He never hears of a deed committed, but what he says, there go I but for the grace of God.

That was John Wesley's expression. There go I but for the grace of God. Let me tell you ladies, you fine lovely ladies, you hear of things that are taking place, there go you but for the grace of God.

You're no better than the rest. Keep it in mind, sister. We'll try to keep it in mind.

Amen. Only the good grace of God has saved us from plunging over the precipice, so let's not look down where they wallow in sin and say how terrible. Yes, it's terrible, but we ought to be very sympathetic and very understanding because we ourselves are all so once foolish, disobedient and deceived, enslaved to lust and pleasures and living in malice and hate and envious of one another.

There go I but for the grace of God. If we take that attitude, we can afford to let them say we think we're better than they. We don't.

They won't understand, and then you ought to try to make them understand. Let them talk, because the glory is put where it belongs on the grace of God and the kind goodness of our heavenly Father. The right attitude is expressed in the hymn.

When he shall come with trumpet sound. What's the next line? May I then in him be found. How? Dressed in his righteousness alone.

Whose righteousness? His righteousness alone. How? Faultless to stand before the throne. There was a song I've always loved very, very much.

I think Zinzendorf wrote it. Translated into English. And I'd loved it a long time, and then when I heard Mrs. Benny and Mrs. Witt sing it, it restored it to me again, and I went back to it, and I've been singing it ever

since.

Jesus, thy blood and righteousness. My beauty are. My glorious dress.

Who's this down here? Yeah. My glorious dress. In this mid-flaming world, arrayed with joy, shall I lift up my head.

That's right. Thank God. Amen.

So we're no better than others, but we have found a hiding place and a savior. And we're saved not by our righteousness, but by his. Therefore, keep mighty humble, brethren, because we may be picking you up off the sidewalk one of these days.

And when we do, we'll try to be as gentle as we'd want you to be with us. Amen.

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