

# The Fear of God - Part 3

by Jerry Bridges

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*To live under the authority of God means to submit to His commands and to live according to His will, as revealed in the Bible.*

**Duration:** 56:16

**Scripture:** Ezekiel 33:30

**Topics:** "Fear Of God"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares a personal experience of listening to a sermon on the power of the tongue and being convicted to make changes in his own life. He then discusses how often people listen to the preaching of the Word of God without intending to apply it in their lives. The speaker references Ezekiel 33, where people were inviting their neighbors to hear the message from the Lord, but were not applying what they heard. The sermon emphasizes the importance of not just being intellectually entertained, but actively applying the teachings of the Bible in our lives. The speaker also highlights the authority of leaders in the church and the need to obey and submit to their authority, as they are accountable to Jesus Christ.

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## Transcript

Good evening to you. Would you turn with me in your Bibles again to Matthew chapter 28, the passage that Pastor Willem read for us a few moments ago. This evening I'm going to begin a series of three messages on characteristics of a person who fears God.

In actuality, all of the Bible would be characteristics that is all of the characteristics of a person that is set forth before us in the Bible would be characteristics of a person who fears God. As I have given a great deal of thought to this, I have concluded that there are certain fundamental or foundational characteristics which are true of a person who fears God. And it is true that if we have these foundational characteristics in place in our lives, not that we will ever fully attain those, but if we are working on those foundational characteristics, then I believe that the others will fall into place.

The first one that we want to consider this evening is that the person who fears God lives under the authority of God and of his Son, Jesus Christ. The reason that I have asked that this passage of Scripture be read, which we commonly refer to as the Great Commission, and when it was read you may have wondered, what does the Great Commission have to do with the fear of God? Of course, it has everything to do with the fear of God, really. But the reason that I had this read is because of what Jesus says here in

verses 18 and 19.

Then Jesus came to them and said, all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me, therefore go and make disciples of all nations. And then he proceeds baptizing them and teaching them whatever he has commanded. We notice here in this passage that Jesus claims all authority, that is, that all authority has been given unto him.

The word authority by definition means the right to command someone else's behavior. It could be moral authority, it could be directional authority. For example, when I was in the United States Navy, I would often receive commands from my commanding officer.

He was the one in authority over me. And as such, he had the right to give me commands, to tell me what to do. When I first learned this passage of Scripture a number of years ago, I was using the King James Version.

That was basically all we had in those days. And those of you who are familiar with the rendition of this in the King James Version will remember that Jesus there in the King James says, all power is given unto me. There is a subtle distinction between authority and power.

And by the way, the word authority here is the appropriate word, it's the appropriate translation. We think of power as the ability to do something or the ability to enforce a command. Authority is the right to do that.

And Jesus here claims all authority. But with that authority, it carries the idea of the corresponding power to enforce that authority. For example, the patrolman who is directing traffic at a busy intersection, he has the authority to put out his hand in one direction and tell people to stop.

Now, when push comes to shove, he does not have the power to make a person stop if that person insists on coming through the intersection. Obviously, he has the authority to report that person and to bring that person into judgment before the proper authorities. But he does not have the physical power.

Jesus has both the authority and the power, but here the emphasis is on his authority. And so when Jesus is saying to us, all authority has been given unto me, therefore go and make disciples. What he is saying to us is, since all authority has been given to me, your commission is to go and to bring people under the sway of my authority.

To make a disciple is to bring that person under the authority of Jesus Christ. That's why he proceeds not only to baptize them, to identify them with him, but he says to teach them to obey everything I have commanded you. Now in a sense I'm going in a circle here because I say authority is the right to command.

Then if we look at the word command in the dictionary, we see that the basic meaning of the word command is to direct with authority. And so there's always this association, authority is the right to command, and to give a command in a bona fide way is to direct with authority. A command tells what to do and carries with it the authority to enforce that command.

And so a person who fears God is a person who lives gladly and joyfully under the authority of Jesus Christ, accepting what he says as true because he says it, and submitting to his requirements as right because he makes them. He has the perfect right to be believed and obeyed. That is to say that when Jesus says something we do not analyze it and say well yeah I think that's proper, okay I'll do that.

No, Jesus has the authority to tell us what to believe and what to do, and because he is the authority then we are to submit to that authority to believe what he says and to do what he says. Now the fact is that God established his authority right up front in the Garden of Eden. In Genesis 2 16, and don't you bother to turn to that, I'm going to turn to various scriptures and you just listen and trust me that I'm reading it correctly, but in Genesis 2 16 God said, and the Lord God commanded the man.

Notice that word commanded, and the Lord God commanded the man, you are free to eat from any tree in the garden, but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil for when you eat of it you will surely die. God gave this commandment. God established his authority right up front in the very beginning with Adam and Eve, and then of course when they disobeyed God came to them in the third chapter in verse 11 and he said, who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat? And so from the very beginning God gave commands.

In this case it was a what we would call a negative command, you shall not eat of the tree of the of the knowledge of good and evil, but nevertheless it was a command. We have positive commands in Scripture, we have negative commands in Scripture, but whether they are positive or negative they are commands. They are God's instruction given to us with authority which we are to receive and to believe.

The idea of God's commanding authority goes right through the Bible. We pick this up in Exodus chapter 20 with the Ten Commandments. Now the word commandments, I don't think it's used there in that passage of Scripture, I didn't check it just before I came up here, but I think that that's true, but nevertheless we call those the Ten Commandments and it's very clearly God commanding to do things and to not do other things.

And all the way through and if we had the time we could trace this through, but I'm just going to come in quickly into the New Testament. In John 14 21 Jesus said, he who has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. And notice there that Jesus didn't say just instructions or suggestions or requests, but he said he who has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me.

The Apostle Paul said the entire law is summed up in a single command, love your neighbor as yourself. That is a command given to us with the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ through one of his commissioned apostles. That's Galatians 5 14.

And then finally in 1 John 5 3, this is love for God to obey his commands. Now you could do a very simple exercise, whether you have a paper concordance or concordance in your computer, simply look up the word command and trace that through the Scriptures and you will see that from Genesis 2 right through to the end of the Bible, consistently God is issuing commands and Jesus said, all authority has been given to me, therefore go and make disciples of me, make, that is bring people under the sway of my authority. And so our commission is not just to go out and win people in the sense of bringing them to the point of salvation, of trusting in Christ.

Obviously with the enabling power and the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit, we do not bring anyone to faith. We present the gospel and the Spirit of God is the one who saves. We know that to be true.

But as we go out to do our part, we're not going out just to evangelize, just to be the instrument to bring a person to the point of faith, but our ultimate objective is to bring that person under the authority of Jesus Christ. That's what evangelism is all about. That's why Jesus died, that he might be Lord and the implication there in the word Lord is the one who exercises authority.

And so to live under God's or Christ's authority is then to live under the authority of his word. Because all of the commands that we have received from the Lord Jesus are given to us in hard copy, we might say, in the written pages of his word. Now this is very important and I'm sure that this is not a problem to any of you here tonight.

At least I don't suspect that it's a problem to any of you here tonight, but I want to bring your attention to a potential problem that you might encounter sometime. And that is a distinction that certain theologians and pastors today would draw between the authority of Jesus Christ and the authority of the Bible. And they would accept the authority of Jesus Christ, so they say, but they would not accept the authority of the Bible.

For example, one of the large mainline denominations in the United States recently went through quite a debate in their higher church councils over whether to ordain homosexuals. And the decision was not to ordain them, but it did not pass by all that striking majority. But nevertheless, in the course of the debate amongst the churches over whether we should do this, there came into my hands a printed copy of a sermon that was preached by one of the pastors in that denomination.

And I'm not quoting verbatim from him, but the gist of what he said was this. He said that this proposal, which is being presented to our General Assembly, states that we are to obey the Word of God. And then he said this, that is fundamentally wrong.

He said we are not to obey the Word of God, we are to obey Jesus Christ. Now I don't know how he manages to separate those two, but this is what he does. You see, he says we are to obey Jesus Christ, but this doesn't mean we have to obey the Bible.

Well, then that gives him the freedom to think, well, I think Christ would say to us thus and such. And so it is a not-so-subtle flaw. It's a very direct attack upon the authority of the Word of God.

And I want to say to you tonight that to live under the authority of God the Father, to live under the authority of Jesus Christ, is to live under the authority of his Word. What he says in his Word are his commands. And only what he says in his Word are his commands, but all that he says that is applicable to us.

Now obviously there were certain things that were applicable to certain people at a point in time. When the prophet Elisha said to Naaman, go and bathe in the river Jordan seven times, that was a specific command or instruction given to him. But all of the commands that are applicable to us, or as I put it, all the moral commands of the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, are authoritative for us.

Furthermore, it does not make any difference whether these commands came to us from the mouth of Jesus as quoted by the authors of the four Gospels, or whether they come to us from the pen of the Apostle Paul, or Peter, or John, or the writer of Hebrews, or any other writers of the Bible. Now I say that because here again there is a movement underfoot to elevate the words of Jesus Christ above the other words of Scripture. Because again, you see, the idea is if we can do that, we can limit things just to the four Gospels, and then we can sort of play games with it.

But Paul is very direct, and Peter is very direct, and James is very direct. But as we heard this morning in that excellent presentation, and if you were not able to attend this morning, I urge you, I encourage you to buy that tape. Because really, that message on can we trust our Bibles really fits in so very beautifully to

what I have to say tonight about the authority of the Word of God.

One of the things that I dislike about red-letter editions of the Bible, and I don't know whether you're a fan of red-letter editions or not, probably the real reason I dislike them is because that red print is harder for me to read at my age. But the theological reason why I disliked it is because it seems to elevate the words of Jesus as if they are more important. For example, I remember that about 15 years ago, there was quite a legal case in the state of Oklahoma, because a woman who had committed adultery with the mayor of the small town where they lived, and it was kind of an open thing, and she was a member of a church there, and she was disciplined by the church and excommunicated from the church, and she sued the church.

And by the way, she won her case. She won damages against the church. But I remember that in her testimony, she said words to the effect, well, Paul maybe said this, but Jesus never said it.

Now the fact is, Jesus said it. He said more than that. All Scripture is inspired, as we were reminded this morning.

And all Scripture is authoritative, and all Scripture is profitable. All Scripture is to be believed and obeyed. Now, we believe that.

I'm sure that there's a sense in which I'm preaching to the choir when I say these words, or carrying coals to Newcastle. I hope you understand one of those two expressions. One is British, and the other is American.

Maybe both of them are Canadian, for all I know. But you know what I mean. I'm preaching to people that I know agree.

But the thing I would ask us tonight is this. Do we really and truly put it into practice? Do we really and truly live under the authority of the Word of God? James 1.22 says, Do not merely listen to the Word and so deceive yourselves, but do what it says. And I often believe that Christians make the mistake of assuming that because they agree with the instruction of a message, that they are obeying it, that they're putting it into practice.

But so oftentimes, we sit under the sound of the teaching and the preaching of the Word of God, and we agree with it, and then we go out without any intent to specifically apply that in our lives. If you would turn with me in your Bibles to Ezekiel chapter 33. Now, there may be one or two of you who do not know where Ezekiel 33 is, and that's on page 767.

Ezekiel chapter 33, beginning with verse 30. As for you, son of man, your countrymen are talking together about you by the walls and at the doors of the houses, saying to each other, Come and hear the message that has come from the Lord. Now, that sounds very encouraging.

It sounds as if people are inviting their neighbors to come to these services, that this prophet Ezekiel, this evangelist by the name of Ezekiel has come to town, and you really need to go and hear this man. They're inviting their neighbors. They say, Come and hear the message that has come from the Lord.

And then this is God's comment on that. My people come to you as they usually do. He's speaking to Ezekiel, and he says, My people come to you, Ezekiel, as they usually do, and sit before you to listen to your words, but they do not put them into practice.

With their mouths, they express devotion, but their hearts are greedy for unjust gain. Indeed, to them, you're nothing more than one who sings love songs with a beautiful voice and plays an instrument well, for they hear your words, but they do not put them into practice. These people were going to be entertained.

It was like going to a night at the opera or going to hear the symphony or going to hear this great violinist that has come to town and is putting on a concert or this great soloist. You're one who sings love songs with a beautiful voice and plays an instrument well. These people were being entertained, but they were not applying what they heard.

Dear friends, I want to put this question very pointedly to you. Are you here this week to be intellectually entertained? Not to listen to good music. We're not having concerts and this kind of thing.

But I think so often those of us who are conservative, evangelicals, reformed, add all of these words to it. And we know our doctrine and we like to hear our correct doctrine and so forth. And we come to be entertained.

And we might not be any different from the Jews of whom God said, they hear your words, but they do not put them into practice. You see, Adam and Eve heard the words of God. You may eat any tree in the garden except this one tree.

You may not eat of that tree. But they disobeyed. Achan heard the word of the Lord.

When they went into battle to Jericho and God said, you're not to take any of the spoils. He heard that just like everyone else, but he did not put it into practice. I'd like to ask you this question tonight to answer in the privacy of your own heart.

When was the last time that you heard a message and you made in your mind a specific application? You said, boy, that really speaks to me. I need to do something about that. I see this area of my life and God through his servant has spoken to me and I have a need in this area of my life.

There's sin there or there's something that I need to make right with God and with somebody else. And you have specifically obeyed a particular command from the word of God. You see, authority is the right to command.

Now, I know that we're not engaged in scandalous sin here. That's not the kind of thing I'm speaking about. Last Thursday afternoon, I went out for my walk.

Some of you saw Jane and I walking around the camp today getting our exercise. When I'm home, that's a regular practice. We have a little course laid out that's about three miles and we walk around that.

And to keep it from being boring, we have these walkmen, these cassette players, you know, that you can clip to your belt and then the earphones. People used to tease me in my old neighborhood because they thought I was listening to rock and roll music. But I was listening to a message from James chapter three on the power of the tongue and the evil of the tongue.

And I was convicted and I said to myself, there's some things I need to make right. Now, we left the next day. But when I get home, I'm going to call up a certain person and I'm going to say, you know, on Thursday, such and such a date, I said to you about another person, he is always self-serving.

And that was sin on my part. I need to make that right. I need to ask your forgiveness for saying that to you.

Dear friends, that's what I mean by making specific applications of the word of God. You see, we can read James chapter three and we can say, oh yes, that's right, isn't the tongue an evil thing? But when is the last time you took steps to do something about your tongue? Jesus said, all authority is given unto me. Therefore, go and bring people under the sway of my authority.

Now, to live under God's authority is also not only to live under the authority of his word, but it is to live under the authority of the authority institutions which he has established. And I see in the New Testament four different institutions of authority, which God has ordained and established for the good of mankind in general and for the good of his people in particular. And these four authority structures are government, the home, the church, and I'm going to actually work.

I'm making that forth in the Apostle Paul's setting forth of these. He actually includes the work under the umbrella of the home because the slaves were a part of the home in that time. But since we do not have slavery and since the principles of the master-slave relationship apply to the employer-employee relationship, I'm pulling that one out from the home and I'm saying the authority structure of your employment.

Let's look at these very briefly and each one of these would be worthy of a message by itself. But I want to just look at these very briefly, but I want to remind you that we're looking at these in the context of the fear of God. That is, we are to live under these authority structures which God has established because we fear God, because we reverence him, because we stand in awe of him, because we want to live under his authority.

Then we live under the authority of the structures which he has ordained. So let's look first of all, just very briefly, at Romans chapter 13. While you're turning to Romans chapter 13, let me say this, that authority is never given to an individual or a group of individuals for their own personal benefit, for their exercise or their own personal craving for power or anything such as that.

Authority is always given to an individual or to a group of individuals to exercise that authority for the benefit of other people. We will see this as we get into these various structures. But in Romans chapter 13, verse 1, everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established.

The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. Now, Paul goes on through verse 7 on this, but I want to stop here because just the reading of that portion serves my purpose.

But it's very clear here that God has established governmental authorities for the good of society. Now, again, this is generally not a problem to those of us who would attend a conference such as this. It's perhaps not so much by our actions that we rebel against governmental authority as it is by our attitude.

And I don't know how it is in Canada, but I know how it is in the United States. And we make jokes constantly about various elected officials, and our cartoonists are masters at drawing caricatures of these people and so forth. And our present incumbent president of the United States, though he was elected by

a pretty good count, is generally unpopular among people, at least people that I talked with.

And so we make jokes about him, and we seek to undermine his authority, not by active resistance, but by our attitude. Remember the kind of authority, governmental authority, that was in existence when Paul wrote these words. It was not a democratic society.

It was not his favorite candidate for emperor of the Roman Empire that had just been elected. The Apostle Paul and the people to whom he was writing, and he was writing to people who were right under the nose, if you please, of the Roman emperor, right there in the city of Rome itself. And he says, we must submit to those in authority.

And the Apostle Peter says the same thing. Let me just turn quickly, you don't have to turn, but let me just turn quickly to 1 Peter chapter 2, verses 13 to 17. Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every authority instituted among men, whether to the king as the supreme authority, or to governors who is sent by him to punish those who do wrong, and to commend those who do right, and so forth.

But we see that this was not only the teaching of Paul, it was also the teaching of Peter. Not that God needed Peter to second Paul in this, because all scriptures inspired by God are God-breathed, as we learned this morning, and all scriptures authoritative, and all scriptures to be obeyed. But nevertheless, when it's repeated again by Peter, we find that this is something that we need to give attention to.

And so God has instituted governmental authority. Now, in the other three authority structures, that is the church, the home, and the workplace, there is always a balancing instruction, that is, people under the authority are to submit, and people who are in the position of authority are to exercise that authority with care, and love, and discretion. Obviously, that does not apply here to governmental authorities.

Paul could not say to the Roman authority structure, now you ought to rule in the fear of God. That is said to the Jewish rulers back in the book of Leviticus or Deuteronomy. But let me just say this tonight.

If there are any of you here who are representatives of some government function, you might be a policeman, a, what we call a highway patrolman, a RCMP, a fireman, an official down at city hall or town hall, I'm sorry, I don't know your terminology all that well. Remember that you are to exercise your authority as under the Lord's authority. And whatever God would say to us in the home and in the workplace about exercising our authority in a caring, responsible manner, I think by implication we can infer that he would say that to you if you were in a position of governmental authority.

That you are to exercise your authority in the fear of God. The second authority structure, and these are not necessarily in order, but just the order that I have them here, is the home. And the classic passage for that, of course, is Ephesians chapter 5 into the first few verses of Ephesians chapter 6. This section begins, in the minds of some, with verse 21.

That is Ephesians 5, 21. Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. And then Paul says, Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord.

For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. I'm going to stop at that point, then we'll take up the husbands in just a moment.

There is a kind of teaching that is abroad, I'm sure it's here in Canada as well as in the United States, in Great Britain, Australia, wherever. That this text really doesn't mean what it appears to mean. And the appeal is made to verse 21, that it's not that wives submit to their husbands, but that husbands and wives submit to one another.

In fact, I was asked to critique a manuscript. And a manuscript is a book before it's been published, when it's still on TypeScript, if you might say. And when there's still possibility of changes being made in it.

And an author whom I met at a conference, he and I were speaking at the same conference, and a few weeks after we had been at this conference, he sent me a copy of a manuscript of a book he was about to publish, and asked if I would critique it for him. And he made this statement. He said that this means, he said, this means nothing more or less than that husbands and wives submit to each other.

And I called him up on the telephone and I said, you know, the problem with that is that's not what the text says. The text says, wives submit to your husbands and husbands love your wives. I said to him, now just parenthetically, I think the responsibility that's laid on the husband is more difficult.

It's kind of open-ended. I mean, he doesn't say, wives submit to your husbands as emulate Christ, but he says to we husbands, and I'm getting ahead of myself, we're to love our wives as Christ loved the church, I submit to you, that's an impossible commandment to keep. We're to aspire to it, we're to work toward it.

Well, enough for that for the moment. Let me read you what New Testament scholar F.F. Bruce, who went to be with the Lord just a few years ago, what he wrote on this passage in his commentary on the book of Ephesians. He said, while the household code is introduced by a plea for mutual submissiveness, the submissiveness enjoined in the code is not mutual.

Wives are directed to be subject to their husbands, children to be obedient to their parents, and slaves to their masters, but the submissiveness is not reciprocated. Husbands are told to love their wives, parents to bring up their children wisely, and masters to treat their slaves considerately. Now, I think we can see here that there is no mutual submission that is intended between parent and child.

We cannot imagine the Apostle Paul or any of the writers of scripture saying, parents and children, submit yourselves to one another. That's not the way it works. Nor would he have said to masters and slaves, submit yourselves to one another.

So why then, when we come to the husband and wife relationship, do some say, oh, this just means mutually submit? No, my friends, it means just what the text says it means. I realize this is an unpopular teaching. I realize that there are people, not only women, but men who are very militantly crusading against this kind of teaching.

And some who would call themselves evangelicals. But I want to say to you tonight, this is what the Bible says. Now, people can bring up all kinds of what ifs or what about or yes buts.

Wives, for example, often complain that husbands do not lead, particularly in the spiritual realm. And I recognize that this is a legitimate complaint. But I want to say to you tonight, the way to address that problem, whatever that way may be, and this is not intended to be a message on marriage tonight, but the way to address that problem is not by violating scripture.

There are scriptural ways to address that problem. And if you want to know what those scriptural ways are, you see your pastor, who's here. That's not intended to be a joke, I mean, seriously.

And I'm glad you didn't take it as such. And I would just say to you, ladies, this. Don't make it difficult for your husband to lead.

The second part within the family structure, he addresses, well, I'm sorry, I overlooked the husband. I addressed that briefly, but just let me come back to that and say here is the balancing teaching. Husbands are to love your wives just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.

That means, men, that we are to act in a sacrificial way. We are to give ourselves up for our wives. This is the way that we exercise our authority, by giving ourselves up for them, not by insisting that we rule the roost, but this is the way that we exercise our authority in a God-fearing way.

And then to children, very quickly. Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Now, there are plenty of you children here that are sitting in front of me this evening.

And I just want to say to you, this is part of what it means to fear God, is to obey your parents. And, you know, there are some passages of scripture that are just so patently clear that it's sometimes embarrassing for those of us who are to teach it. We look at that and we read it and we say, let's pronounce the benediction and go home, because there just doesn't seem to be anything that we can add to make it any more clear.

And this is one of those. Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Now, having spoken just briefly to the children, let me speak to the parents.

And I speak as a parent. My parental duties have been completed for the most part. I'm more a counselor now than one who is exercising authority.

But we have an obligation. We have a responsibility to teach our children to obey us. My wife, for one year, two years, I can't remember, she assisted in a first grade classroom in a neighborhood school where a friend of hers was teaching first grade.

And she said it was just awful the way these kids just had no respect for the authority of the teacher because they had not been taught at home to respect their parents. How is a child going to learn to obey the parents unless we as parents teach them that? We have a responsibility to teach our children to obey. And then we not only have a responsibility to teach them to obey, but the balancing thing here in verse 4 of chapter 6, fathers, do not exasperate your children.

Instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord. We are not to provoke them by harsh and nitpicking rules. By ultra-legalism.

And so, parents, we have a responsibility to exercise our authority in a very careful and loving and wise manner. Then employment, because this is really part of the family here. Colossians 3, 22 to 24 is probably a little more expressive than the Ephesians passage, so if you'll just turn a few pages over.

Colossians 3, 22 to 24. And I'm going to insert where the word slaves appears, I'm going to insert the word employees. Where the word master appears, I'm going to insert the word employer.

Whether you are the owner of a business or whether you represent an employer as a manager or supervisor or foreman or some, in other words, you have people under authority under you. But he says employees. Obey your earthly employers in everything and do it not only when their eye is on you and to win their favor, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord.

And as I pointed out last night, that really is in the fear of the Lord. In other words, all of these responsibilities, whether we are the one exercising the authority or the one submitting to the authority, it's to be exercised in the fear of the Lord, out of reverence for God, in awe of God, who he is. And then he goes ahead, whatever you do, work at it with all your heart is working for the Lord, not for men.

The Christian employee. I was going to say ought to be the best employee in the business, but I don't want to say that because that might not be possible. There might be people who are just inherently better than you are.

But I do want to say a Christian employee is to be the best that he or she can be. He says, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward, it is the Lord Christ you are serving. When you submit to the instructions and the authority of your employer structure, whether it's the ultimate boss or a supervisor that he has appointed over you, when you submit to this, you are submitting to the Lord's authority because God has ordained this structure in his society.

This is the way things work. Otherwise, we have anarchy. We have everyone doing that which is right in his own eyes.

Then the employers are addressed in chapter four in verse one. Employers provide your employees with what is right and fair because you know that you also have a master. You have an employer over you in heaven.

If you are the owner of your business, you are not the ultimate one in authority. You have an authority over you, namely Jesus Christ, and you have a responsibility to treat your employees fairly and right in the matter of hours and pay and all of these kinds of things that go into an employment relationship these days. And the implication here is God, your master is looking down, just as he is looking down on the employee who is working and the supervisor is in another room or gone to the lunch hour or something like this.

Paul has said to him, you work just as hard when your supervisor's gone as you do when he's here. Then he turns to the employer or the master and he says, now you treat your employees right and fairly because you also have a master. Then very quickly, the clock is, I think somebody has speeded it up here.

But Hebrews chapter 13 addresses the authority of the eldership in the church. Hebrews 13, 17, verse 7 actually belongs in this, but I'm going to direct our thoughts just to verse 17 because it's so clear and so direct. Obey your leaders and notice this, and submit to their authority.

Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. There you see, they are in authority over you, but they are also under authority of the one in heaven and they must give an account.

There is only one ultimate authority in all of the universe and that's Jesus Christ. Everybody else is under his authority and if they were exercising authority, they exercise that authority as one who must give account to him. He says, they keep watch over you as men who must give account.

Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that will be of no advantage to you. Now, if you're taking notes, you can just jot down 1 Thessalonians 5.12 as a cross reference to that. We're not going to look at this, but Paul also teaches this principle in 1 Thessalonians 5.12. But I just want to call your attention, it says here, submit to their authority.

I remember the first time, and I really think it's the only time I've ever heard a message from this passage of scripture. And I was shocked. I was absolutely rocked in my shoes.

It had never, never, never occurred to me that I had a responsibility unto God to submit to those that were in authority over me in the local church. You know, if I don't like this church, I just go down the street and find one I do like. This kind of thing.

But the scripture is very clear, dear friends. We're to submit to those who are in authority over us. Now, for those who exercise that authority, you all are aware of the passage in 1 Peter chapter 5, how we are to exercise that authority.

Paul says in 1 Peter chapter 5, beginning with verse 1, to the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder, a witness of Christ's sufferings, and one who also will share and the glory to be revealed, be shepherds of God's flock, that is, under your care. There's under your authority, but notice he uses the word under your care. You have this authority in order to exercise care of the flock.

Serving as overseers, not because you must, but because you're willing as God wants you to be, not greedy for money, but eager to serve, not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. We lead by serving. Jesus said, whoever will be great among you, let him be your servant.

And if we find ourselves in positions of authority in the church, we should exercise that authority as serving those who are under our authority. There is always this, what I would call the balance, that is, there is the instruction to those of us when we, in all of us, we always find ourselves under some authority structure. There has never been a moment in my life when I was not under some authority structure.

You know, from birth, I was under the authority structure of my parents, and then under teachers and coaches and so forth. And as I went out into the armed forces, I was certainly under authority there. And even in the navigators, I am under authority.

There is a man who is 20 years younger than me that I have to get permission to do certain things or to skip doing certain things. I wrote a letter to him several months ago, and I said, I think that this particular staff conference is coming up for us. It's really not applicable to me what I'm doing now.

I'd like to be excused from that. He called me up on the phone. He said, that's great.

I understand. Go ahead. But I'm under authority.

I also have spent most of my life, and not currently now, except for my wife here, as husband. But most of my life, from the time I was 21, when I was first commissioned as an officer in the Navy, right on through most of those years, I have been in a position of exercising authority. This is the way life is.

And the thing I want us to see tonight is that the submission to these authority structures which God has established is part of our submission to God. If we want to live under God's authority, we must live under the authority of his word. But we must also live under the authority of those institutions which he has

ordained and established for the good of mankind in general, as in government, for the good of his people, particularly as in the church, in the family, in the workplace.

And may God help us tonight to learn to live under his authority. Let's pray.

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