

Authority: Family

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[0 : 00] Well, good morning. It's nice to be back with you after being sick last week. I always hate to miss our fellowship, and I especially hate it when I am home doing nothing fun at all.

I'm really glad to be here with you today. We don't have a primary text for today, which we normally do, but let me ask you to begin this morning by joining me in Psalm 115 and verse 3.

Psalm 115 and verse 3. We're going to take a brief break from our study of Romans and take up a topic in series form.

And I just have to tell you that the word series tastes bad on my tongue when spoken from the pulpit on the Lord's Day, as we most regularly consider the text verse by verse, chapter by chapter, book by book.

We think this is the normative, healthiest way to approach the Bible. That said, sometimes a topic requires our particular attention, and so we labor to take it up faithfully and observe the scope of what the Bible teaches concerning it.

[1 : 15] But when we do, please be extra discerning. We want to be really careful at this point.

Anytime we do theology systematically, we must be careful that we don't piecemeal the Scripture to bend it to our opinion, but rather that we are honest with it as we pull its teaching together.

There are so many erroneous things. It's a cult start by taking up the Bible and approaching topics and doing it poorly.

So let's not do that. Now the topic we're going to take up is the topic of authority. So we want to be especially careful not to become a cult after touching such a topic.

We're going to do so primarily because at the close of this past year, a number of our members suggested that we teach on congregationalism.

We are congregationalists as a church. This is a conviction that we have, and in some future weeks, I'll explain what that word means if you don't know. And it's important, though, for us to know what it means, what it doesn't mean, and to know what is the authority that a church holds together and what authority a church member holds individually.

[2 : 37] So this is what was asked of us, and we're going to do that, but we're going to approach it more broadly first. Secondly, the topic of authority is a good topic to take up because we all have an authority issue.

As Americans, it is just ingrained into us to have a sense of rogue individualism. Not all bad. Our experiment in order of liberty certainly has a sentiment that leans heavy on the liberty portion of that equation, right?

wants to shy away from the ordered portion of it, really, really enjoys the liberty portion of it.

Additionally, we have all seen authority abused.

We have observed it. If you've not seen abused authority, come speak to me. I'll point out some cases to you from this past week. And many of us have experienced firsthand the abuse of authority.

So there is reason to be suspect. To be really cautious when somebody says they have authority and press that authority on us.

[3 : 51] Beyond all of this, at our very core, apart from the redemptive work of Christ, we are rebellious people. It is our nature before Christ makes us new to be rebellious.

You can trace briefly the biblical narrative backwards and see a New Testament church not heeding the words of the apostles. You see a Jewish people rejecting the teaching of Jesus and crucifying him for what they believe to be blasphemy.

We see a nation turning away again and again and again from the prophets, not taking care with their temple worship as they have been commanded, neglecting to drive out the people from the

promised land, refusing to fight for fear, desecrating holy places, and on and on and on and on. The Bible is a story of rebellious people with a loving God who redeems them. And all of this finds us beginning with our first parents, the original rebels who doubted God's good authority in Genesis chapter 3.

thought, surely God doesn't really know what's best. So we have an authority problem.

[5 : 15] But there is power and there is dominion in this world. We must first recognize that God has authority.

God's authority is innate. That means that nobody gave it to him. It is his. He possesses it. And he is the final authority, the absolute authority.

No one rules over him. God created all things with good, mighty words and has both the right and power to rule over his creation.

Everything that we see and experience, God reigns over. Psalm 115 and verse 3 says, Our God is in the heavens.

He does all that he pleases. Fully powerful to accomplish everything that he intends to accomplish. He has absolute and final authority.

[6 : 26] Another place in the text, Jeremiah chapter 32 and verse 17. This is from our scripture reading just a few weeks ago. Ah, Lord God, it is you who have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and by your outstretched arm.

God determines what nations will exist and where they will exist.

Acts chapter 17 and verse 26. He decides what king is to rule and when and where. Isaiah chapter 44 and verse 28.

Sometimes to the judgment of his people. He decides whether the purposes of a ruler will stand or fall. Psalm 33 verse 10 and 11.

He even once determined that wicked people would take the life of his dear son so that we sinners might live. Acts chapter 2 verse 23 and 24.

[7 : 30] God has authority over all the important events of human history but also over the lives of individual people. Just consider on this Sanctity of Human Life Sunday.

He knits us together in our mother's wombs. Psalm 139 verse 13 through 16. Intimately involved. Authoritatively involved in our creation. He decides whether we will travel or stay home. James 4 verse 13 through 17. As we have seen in Romans chapter 8 and will consider further when we return to our study of Romans.

God also exercises his authority to bring forgiveness and new life. Ephesians chapter 2 verse 8 through 10. I'm grateful that God is authoritative over the salvation of my soul.

God's authority is necessarily good because he is good. Too many people in this world feel that God's authority is an oppressive authority.

[8 : 45] But it's not, right? It's designed for good. Psalm 119 verse 68. God, you are good and do good.

So whether you recognize it or not or care to yield to it or not, there is an absolute and final authority in this world.

You can bow to it now, which I urge you to do because it is good. Turn from your rebellion. Turn to the perfect righteousness of Christ.

Place your faith in his sacrificial death on your behalf and find the salvation of your soul. Bow to God's authority now. Come to him on his terms.

Or, one day, you will be judged and you will be made to bow to his authority. Now, recognizing that God is the absolute and final authority, we do well to ask, but how is it that that authority is made effectual in the world?

[9 : 53] How is it that it's carried out in the world in which we live? Have we been left groping for what God requires of us? No, we have not.

He has written, by the power of the Holy Spirit, through the pens of his servants, a book. And this book gives us all the answers we need to the lives ordered under God's authority.

It's sufficient for that task. It has everything in it that we need. And it begins with a command.

Genesis chapter 1 and verse 26.

Then God said, Let us make man in our image after our likeness, and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the heavens, and over the livestock, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.

As part of the creation mandate, we are made as people who image God in this world. And we do it specifically by having dominion, delegated authority over the world in which we live.

[11:07] And then more specifically, we see in Genesis chapter 2 and verse 15. The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and to keep it, or to cultivate it and to protect it.

So we see commands given, right? Rule over this. Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth with my glory. So we as image bearers are delegated authority.

Our authority is not absolute, and it is not final. It always has limits, and is always subservient to the one who delegated it.

It's got boundaries set up for it. Authority gone awry, which there are many examples of, is always authority that steps out of the bounds which God places on it.

When a person or institution takes up a responsibility not granted to them, or exercises an authority granted to them in a way not granted to them, it is at best ineffective.

[12:19] At best, it's ineffective. It is at worst abusive. As a book, I want to commend it to you, but I haven't read the whole thing, so I'm not going to commend it to you yet.

But it has been good and helpful so far in my reading of it. Written by a man named Jonathan Lehman, many of you are probably familiar with. And its main title is Authority, but the subtitle of it I just love.

So the subtitle is How Godly Rule Protects the Vulnerable, Strengthens Communities, and Promotes Human Flourishing. So delegated authority, properly exercised by the Scripture, is good for us, and it's good for others.

It's not this great evil to be avoided, but rather a thing for us to take up, and to understand, and to exercise for the place in which we live.

If our aim is to submit to God's good authority for the sake of protecting the vulnerable, strengthening our communities, and promoting human flourishing, then this topic is of great importance, and it really must be well understood.

[13:36] So we see in God's Word that God delegates His authority through three institutions and six positions.

Three institutions and six positions. And I just want you to take a moment and consider what those three institutions and six positions might be.

You're all Bible readers. I know that you are. God has ordained authority in this world. Do you know them? I hope at least a couple have popped into your mind.

You experience them on a regular basis. Over the next four weeks, Lord willing, we will be considering the three institutions and the subsidiary positions in some detail.

A breeze over, to be sure. Today we're going to talk about the family some, but we're primarily going to talk about the family as a way of introducing the idea to you of these three institutions and the six positions.

[14:45] So here they are. Are you ready? Three institutions and an accompanying tool, which we'll talk about in detail in the coming weeks, that comes along with that institution.

The first, the family. The first is the family. And the accompanying tool is the rod. The rod, right?

This would have been the short stick that a shepherd would have carried. He would have had a staff, which was for gentle correction, and a rod, which was for cracking sheep over the head.

Those are the two tools that are being used, right?

This is the tool that comes along with the authority of the family. Proverbs 13, 24 is an example. Whoever spares the rod hates his son.

And I am not telling you you should crack your kid over the head with a short stick. That's not what the Bible is saying either, at all, right? But corrective discipline is important for the training of children.

[15:44] Whoever spares the rod, here are those parents, hates his son. But he who loves him is diligent to discipline him.

So the authority of the family comes with a tool we know as the rod for corrective discipline. The second institution, which was a people for God, which we now call the church, right?

So the second institution is the church. This is the one that often people just grapple with. What is the tool given to the church? What could it possibly be?

Well, it's the keys. The keys. We see mention of this in Matthew chapter 16 and verse 19. There Jesus says, I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven.

And whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven. Whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. And this is a head-scratcher until you read Matthew chapter 18.

[16:47] And we get this careful prescription for church discipline, for bringing about the correction of souls that are going wayward. They're unrepentant in their sin.

And there's an authority that the church brings to bear called the keys. This process of disciplining people we hope and pray back into right relationship with the Lord God.

Right? So we got the family with the rod, the church with the keys, and finally, and this one probably came into your mind fairly immediately, government. And the tool used by government is the sword. So Romans chapter 13, verse 3 and 4, For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad.

Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval.

For he is God's servant for your Lord in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer. Right?

[17:48] So we have these tools given to these three institutions that have authority, and we're going to talk about many of the complications that come in a fallen world as these institutions play out their roles.

So three institutions, and then six positions. So within the family, we have the authoritative role of husband, and the authoritative role of parent.

In the church, we have the authoritative role of elder, and we argue, as congregationalists, the authoritative role of the congregation.

Right? The church as a whole. The government has various offices as suit the occasion and the time. King, governors, judges, Congress, a president.

Et cetera. And then outside of these three institutions, there's one extra-institutional, biblical position. The employer, or boss.

[19:01] We're going to pick up the language of master in the Bible. Maybe for our day, manager could be the best word. Perhaps your employer is far removed from you, but you do have a person that you answer to in your job.

Colossians 4.1, Masters, treat your bond servants justly and fairly, knowing that you also have a master in heaven. And we're not going to take up that one in this study, so that's an extra one. It deserves some time and attention, but we're going to think about these different positions that exist within these three institutions across this time.

Now, within these three institutions and six positions, there is granted two types of authority. Two types of authority. Number one, you have the authority of coercion, which is the power to make someone do something by force.

I like Jonathan Lehman in his book, Authority, uses rather the term the authority of command. So, the power to make somebody do something by force.

[20:12] Simple example of this with the government. There are speed limits posted everywhere. And if you break the speed limit, it is justly deserved that you get pulled over and you get a ticket for that.

Doesn't mean we always follow that rule, but we can't complain when we get the coercive authority applied to us to keep that speed limit.

You get enough tickets, you will find yourself going slower and slower. We don't try to persuade our toddlers to do things all the time.

Sometimes we make them do things. My children had to freeze when I told them to freeze. Why? Because I was concerned for their safety. So, we taught them to do that.

So, if we were in a parking lot or they were running towards the road, I could say freeze and they would plant their feet and not move. And they knew that there would be punishment if they didn't do what we asked them to do.

[21:09] So, this is the way this power comes to bear. And those tools that I mentioned to you accompany this power, this authority of command. The rod, the keys, and the sword.

We also have the authority of persuasion. And Jonathan Lehman uses the term counsel. The authority of counsel.

The power to convince someone to do something. So, if you're thinking about the church, we're going to talk about this at length next week.

Elders do not have the power of command. elders, myself by myself, I do not exercise the keys by myself.

I exercise the keys as a part of a congregational whole, but not by myself. I have never and will never because I don't think I'm authorized to do it by the Lord, kick somebody out of the church and so declare them not a Christian.

[22 : 14] I don't think I have the power to do that by myself and therefore I won't. This is good, right? You personally offend me and I say, how dare you? That's offensive. How could you be a Christian and say such a thing?

You're out of here. It's not a power that I have. But I do have an authority which means that it should bear on your conscience. Hebrews 13, 17 says, obey your leaders and submit to them for they're keeping watch over your soul.

This authority of counsel or persuasion, it's what I'm doing right now. I'm trying to convince you that authority is good and I want you to take it up and by the power of the spirit, I hope it works down into your heart so that you will want to obey it.

We do this day in and day out. But inevitably, every time I preach a sermon, somebody comes up to me and says, I don't know. Well, what do I do?

I don't say, get in your car and go home. I say, well, I'd love to convince you. Let's go back to the text. Let's keep working on it together. Maybe I was wrong.

[23 : 20] Let's look at it and let's work together toward the truth together. So, the authority of command and the authority of counsel are helpful for us to get right in our mind.

Again, the authority of command possesses the right of corrective discipline. The authority of counsel while the Bible still is saying you should listen to this authority, it has no immediate retributive consequence if you don't obey it.

Okay? So, let's remember, and I'm setting you up for a lot of this for the next two weeks, but let's remember God is the absolute and final authority and God delegates authority and authorizes the boundaries of that authority.

So, we do well to lay aside our experiences and our prejudices against authority and to lay bare God's word on the matter. Whether or not our experience of authority has been positive, what might a world, a nation, a church, a family look like when ordered properly by God's good authority.

It's really worth stopping and considering. If God is the authority and he's good and he's created and delegated authority, which is good, huh, what might it look like?

[24 : 52] We'll talk about this at length, but our church, even as congregationalists, we're not a pure democracy. Pure democracy would be chaos in the life of a church.

This is not the way that God intended for it to work together. We need to understand these roles and categories so that we can properly function within them.

Charles Spurgeon once said, this is just a broad quotation, he wasn't specifically speaking of authority at the time, this is on the back of the bulletin if you care to see it, he said, I believe certain doctrines because God says they are true and the only authority I have for their truth is the word of God.

I receive such and such doctrines not because I can prove them to be compatible with reason, not because my judgment accepts them, but because God says they are true.

Now this is one of the best services we can render to God, to submit ourselves to him in our belief of what he has revealed and ask him to fix his truths in our hearts and make us obey them.

[26 : 01] Now, the family is the first and foremost institutional authority. And what I mean by that is that it was created first and as foremost, it's foundational to all of the other systems that we see playing out.

As goes the family, so goes the rest of society. You will not have strong churches without strong families, families, you will not have strong countries without strong families.

Consider that this is why over the last century, our enemy has been after the family. That is the primary focus of the attacks on our well-being.

It was created in the early days of the creation of the world. You can read the account in Genesis chapter 2. Adam is given that dominion mandate. Go forth, be fruitful, multiply, rule over all things, and then he rightly declares that Adam is going to need a partner to be able to do so.

God institutes the family, husband and wife. And if mankind is to spread God's image across the globe, then they needed a mechanism by which to do so.

[27 : 21] The whole thing gets messed up before children even enter into the scene, but it was always the intention of this institution, right, that it would be husband and wife and children, because we see this command to multiply and to fill the earth with the glory of God.

So again, we see within this institution of the family, we see two positions. We see the husband and we see the parents. Now the husband, here's this husband, does not have the authority of command.

look around in the text, I challenge you, you will not find a rod given to the husband. The husband rather has the authority of counsel.

people. 1 Corinthians 11 3 says this, but I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a wife is her husband, and the head of Christ is God.

I mean, a subservient delegated authority. Ephesians chapter 5 verse 22 through 28, wives, submit to your own husbands as to the Lord.

[28 : 33] There's the conscience command, the thing that weighs on you. You'll be judged for one day. Should you be obedient to this? You should be obedient to this. Wives, submit to your own husbands as to the Lord.

For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church, his body and is himself its savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.

And then the command goes on. Now, I was a sociology major. I did my undergrad work at the University of North Georgia. Many of the conversations right now that are just shocking our culture, I can't believe we're having these kinds of conversations about sexuality and gender, we were having in the classroom two decades ago.

We were talking about all of this already. And I had a sociology of gender class, and the professor's vendetta in that class was to condemn Christianity and for what it had done to the relationship between men and women.

And there were many females in that class that loved everything that he had to say. There was one in particular, she was a middle aged woman, she had come back to school, and she had a really good friend whose husband in the name of Christianity using the scripture was physically abusive to her.

[30 : 02] Like, put her in the hospital physically abusive to her. And I listened to her, one class period, bemoan Christianity for this, and she started to speak again in another class period, and I just shot my hand up.

Before I even thought what I was going to say, shot my hand up, and I was called on. And I just turned to her, and I said, I said, ma'am, quite a bit older than me. I said, ma'am, nowhere in the Bible is the justification for what that man is doing to his wife found.

It is not found in the scripture. He's misusing it if he's using it as the justification. So your attack against Christianity is not founded. And I'll say that to the degree that I'll say, as a Christian man, if that woman is ready to leave that husband for his abusive behavior, I'm there to help.

Now, I don't bear the power of the sword, so this gets complicated, right? But I do believe as a Christian I should be one who seeks justice. And by God's grace, it shut down the attacks against Christianity again and again and again.

Another class that I had, sociology of religion class, same professor, going hard and read this text, Ephesians 5, he read verse 22 through 24 that wives should submit in everything to their husbands and people are up in arms and they're very upset about Christianity and what it's done and how oppressive it is to women and I just quietly got my Bible out and I opened it up and I set it on the desk and I don't know why, but at one point he said, okay Nathan, what do you think?

[31 : 42] And I said, well since you asked, you misuse the Bible for your agenda and you ought to read the rest of the text.

So I just read it. So here it is, verse 25. Husbands, here we are, oh men, oh if you're being proud at the moment, wives should submit to us and everything. Husbands, love your wives.

This is not an emotional thing, this word does not mean that. Should we be affectionate towards our wives? Yes, we should. Right? Sacrificially serve your wives, love your wives, seek their highest good in all things.

And he's going to explain what that highest good is in just a moment. That's what we're supposed to be doing. Husbands, we're supposed to love our wives as Christ loved the church.

And in case you're so dense that you still don't get it, he says, and gave himself up for her. How did Christ love the church?

[32 : 43] He died for the church. That flips the whole thing on its head. Right? You cannot support a feminist agenda from this text.

This is the kind of authority we are meant to be exercising in our homes. Right? Gave himself up for her. That he, and we're talking about Christ and the church, but this is the way we're supposed to be serving our wives, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.

This is the way we are supposed to be serving our wives, right? Seeking their highest good, which is their spiritual gain. In the same way, again, I think Paul knows how thick-headed we can be.

In the same way, husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. So we work by the power of the word to persuade our wives.

We're giving them counsel. We're helping to steer them. We're giving them guidance for how they need to live their wives. Now, I meant to ask my wife for permission to share this story, so I hope she won't mind that I'm sharing it.

[34 : 09] I think she won't mind that I'm sharing it. Sam, I am sorry. My wife likes true crime TV, and I don't know the name of the show, but she got onto a show that was like bizarre crime kind of stuff, and I just was seeing in her kind of this growing anxiety, just fears that I felt were misplaced for her own safety, for the safety of our children.

And so I began by saying, I don't know that that's really serving your soul, watching those shows. I think it's creating this temptation in you to fear, not trust the Lord's providence in our lives.

And she said, yeah, you might be right, yeah, I'll think about it. I'm like, okay, that's great. Now some time went on, and I went, hey, are you still watching? Still noticing that there's kind of these fears in you?

Are you still watching? Yeah, I'm still watching it. So I just said a little more emphatically, I really think you need to stop. I think it's time. And then we took a trip up to Clayton, and we were playing on a river.

Our kids were toddlers at the time, and we were across from a dirt road on a riverbank, rocky riverbank. We were sitting in chairs, Sam and I were, and the boys were playing around us, and an old truck went rolling by.

[35 : 26] Admittedly, it was creepy. It was black. The windows were like blacked out on the truck and rolling by. But it was like a really popular fishing river. I'm fairly sure the guy was just scouting a place to go fishing. But he went rolling by really slow, and Sam said, boys, quick, quick, quick, get behind me, get behind me, get behind me.

And I was like, what are you doing right now? And she said, he might be a sniper. I love you, Sam. Don't hate me for telling this story. So it was at this point, the very first thing I said was, it's time to stop watching that show. It's time to stop watching that show.

And to my wife's wonderful credit, she said, you're right. You're right. right. She submitted to my authority of persuasion. It just took a little time for us to get there, but she said, you're right.

There's this irrational fear arising in me, and I see that you're working for my good. Thank you.

Thank you for doing this. If husbands abuse this authority, we take up something that's not ours to take up.

[36 : 34] We step outside of the bounds, we become abusive. And I don't think anybody in this room is physically abusive. If you are, you better look out.

But I will also say, men, with our anger, we can emotionally abuse our wives. We can get our way with the threat of us blowing our tops and disrupting the peace in the house.

And a lot of your wives might tiptoe around you just wondering when they're going to misstep. We want to be sure that we don't do this. We do not have that type of authority as husbands.

Aim at the highest good of your wife, the spiritual good of your wife, the care and protection of your family in the way you exercise your authority. Second position in the home is that of parent.

And we'll wrap this up fairly quickly here. Now, with parenting there is the authority of command.

Please don't give your children authority. There's not an authority delegated to children.

[37 : 43] The authority is delegated to you to help them to grow. We want our children to grow in wisdom in the world, which includes all the little practical things that we need to teach them how to do. They need to know how to make the peanut butter sandwich and to clean up after.

But most importantly, it's those core things they need to know for godliness. Psalm 78, verse 5-7, He established a testimony in Jacob and appointed a law in Israel which He commanded our fathers to teach their children, that the next generation might know them, the children yet unborn, and arise and tell them to their children, so that they should set their hope in God and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments.

We are supposed to teach God's good commands to our children. And this is a lot of work. It's a day-in and it's a day-out work. And we get help in the doing of it, but that authority has been given to you, parents.

This is your job in your children's lives. Another text, Ephesians 6, verse 1-4, Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.

Honor your father and mother. This is the first commandment with a promise, that it may go well with you, and that you may live long, in the land. So children, you need to hear, God has given you authority for your good.

[39 : 08] It doesn't always go perfectly. Your parents are not perfect. I tell my children all the time, I am not perfect. I am trying, but I'm not. But I'm aiming at your good. That's what I'm trying to accomplish here.

I'm going to miss it sometimes, but I'm really trying to do the right thing for you. If you will listen to me and follow the things that I'm teaching you to do, there's a promise in the Bible for you that it will go well with you.

And then we see verse 4, fathers, which also could be translated parents, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

So we see even here there's a parameter put on the authority of command that we have as parents. once again, while we may bring the rod to bear in our children's lives, we ought not overdo such a thing, because we could provoke our children to anger.

And we've, in another time, talked about this text and talked about what that means is they have a general brooding intent towards their parents. They want to cast off your authority because it's not good from their estimation in any measure at all.

[40 : 26] They're just looking for ways to reject your leadership in their life. We want to bring along our kids. We want to do it in a way that shows them how they ought to follow the Lord and we want to do it in a way that is consistent with the way the Lord brings discipline to us.

Lots of instructive discipline. The occasional corrective discipline, we want to be doing this work carefully and clearly as we exercise this authority of command.

I think it's just a practical wisdom. This authority of command seems to give way as children grow to a more authority of counsel.

There's a point at which you may not want to bend your child over your knee any longer. It might be better to sit down and reason with them. You also might threaten to kick them out of your house.

That's some retribution for them as well. But we want to see ourselves coming alongside our children as they get older and helping them to walk wisely through life.

[41 : 28] All of this meant for good. I commend you families in this church. I see all the hard work that you're doing. I think it's a blessing.

It's a real work of grace. I love standing back and watching you work with your children. I'm excited for the generation to come and the generation that will follow that. I'm so happy for the way the Lord is working here in the families of our church.

So Lord willing, we'll take up this framework next week. We're going to talk about the church and the role of elders specifically. We're going to install our new elders. We've got four new elders that we haven't done an installation for.

It's been way too long. So we're going to do that as part of our gathering together next week. The week after that we'll talk about the church and the congregation and what kind of authority the congregation bears and then we'll finish it up.

I know you're all going to look forward to it with the government. So let me just pray closing for us.