

Authority: Government

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[0 : 00] Well, good morning. We are on our final week in a series on authority. This first week of our study, I worked to make a case that there is God-ordained authority in the world and that we do well to understand this and submit to it.

We then considered briefly the authority of the family. Over the next two weeks, we thought together about the authority of the church and elder-led congregationalism. Now, in hindsight, I think I would have spent the four weeks set aside just working out the case for elder-led congregationalism and all of the implications thereof.

But, alas, here we are. Today, we have purpose to consider the authority of the government. Now, in my study and preparation for today, I find that I will struggle to make a comprehensive presentation that won't raise more questions than it answers.

Interestingly, if we think about the authority of the government in our particular system, the primary authority holder is the citizen.

And so, it creates a lot of interesting complications that I'd like to work out in their entirety, but I don't think we'll have the time this morning.

[1 : 19] So, I'm going to backpedal just a bit, which I hope will serve the greater good. So, this morning, we're going to do three things together. First, I want to remind you once again, and very briefly, of the eight overarching biblical assertions I made on week one and have reminded you of in each subsequent week.

Number two, we will unpack in brief our Confessions article on civil government, the one found in your bulletin, the one that was part of our recitation this morning.

So, we're going to take that sentence by sentence and look at some scripture proof for that. So, we're not going to ignore the issue of governmental authority altogether this morning. But then thirdly, I will make a short case for the good of submission to godly authority.

So, kind of round this thing out for our service. Now, our time will not be devoid of the Bible, but I do not have a text for you to turn to to begin with.

You may be wondering what text I turn to, and you probably know, if you're paying at all attention to my preaching, that I have all of the scripture references in my notes.

[2 : 32] I don't frantically flip. I find that that takes a lot of time. I'm not as fast as turning pages as I'd like to be. So, I put them right there in my notes, but I still bring up and open up the scripture, typically to the primary text we're preaching on, because it's a visible sign of the authority that's over my preaching.

So, as we're thinking about authority, I always wanted to be really clear that this is under the authority of God's word. So, this morning, I turned to Romans chapter 13.

We are going to reference it, but not in very much detail. But that's why I do this. But I do want you to have your Bibles in hand, to listen actively, and to take notes.

I'd be really happy to have you turn with me and turn your attention to the scripture as we think clearly this morning together. So, if you want to study this topic further, so if you've been primed to think about authority more, if this has created good conversations in your family, amongst your friends, at work, etc., and you want to do more work with this, I'll be really glad to do so with you. I would like to spend some more time on it. And what I'm going to do is suggest that we read together the book I've referenced a number of times called *Authority, How Godly Rule Protects the Vulnerable, Strengthens Our Communities, and Promotes Human Flourishing* by Jonathan Lehman.

[4 : 01] So, this is that book that I hold in my hand. I've referenced it again a couple of times. I do commend it to you. I'm not sure that I agree with every jot and tittle in it just yet, but I think it'll create

some really healthy conversation amongst us.

And so, I'll make a post this week on Slack to just gauge interest. So, if you're interested in doing so, interact with that post, and we'll see if we can come up with a plan to think more about this very thing.

As I said today, session four of this on authority, the government. But first, here are the eight overarching biblical assertions in our study so far.

So, firstly, and quite possibly most importantly, God's authority is innate. That means that it comes from him.

Nobody gave him authority or he has the highest authority. And as such, it is final. So, if God says something, that is the standard by which everything else must exist.

[5 : 05] So, God's authority is innate and it is final. Number two, God's authority is necessarily good because he is good.

It's part of his very nature and therefore anything that emanates from him must then be for our good. So, we often immediately think of authority as a bad thing, an oppressive thing, but not the case with God's authority.

His authority is necessarily good because he is good. Thirdly, humankind has an authority problem. We do not like authority.

And we're going to revisit this particular point as we kind of pick up this argument for the good of authority in our lives. So, I'll move on from it now. But we have an authority problem as humankind. Fourthly, the way God's authority works out in the world is through delegation. So, God delegates authority that always has limits and is always subservient to the one who delegated.

[6 : 15] So, God remains the highest authority even as he delegates authority. That authority answers to him. Fifthly, when a person or institution takes up a responsibility not granted to them, right?

So, they seize authority when it's not been given to them. Or exercises an authority that is granted to them in a way that's not granted to them.

It is at best ineffective. It is at worst abusive. A scale to be had there. Sixth, the aim of exercising authority and submission to God's good authority is for, and this was borrowed from the subtitle of the book I mentioned, the sake of protecting the vulnerable, strengthening our communities, and promoting human flourishing, right?

All very good things, right? I think we could say yes and amen to all of those. So, exercising godly authority is for this very good end.

Number seven, God delegates his authority through three institutions and six positions. And I'm just going to rattle off the three institutions for you quickly. The family, the church, and the government.

[7 : 41] Okay? So, family, church, government. And you do really well, and Lehman's book does get into this idea of sphere authority. There's these three institutions, and they're given reign over particular things.

What are those things, and how are they meant to interact together? So, three institutions. The family, the church, the government, and then there are six authoritative positions.

And then, eighth, lastly, within these three institutions and six positions, there's granted two types of authority. The first is the authority of command, or you could think in terms of coercion.

So, it's the power to make someone do something by force, right? There's serious consequences if you don't do the thing that you're being told to do.

It possesses the right of corrective discipline. So, we talked a bit about those tools that are given. The rod, given to the family. The keys, given to the church.

[8 : 42] And the sword, given to the government. So, this type of authority is the type of authority that the government has. The authority of command.

The other type is the authority of counsel, or persuasion, which is the power to convince someone to do something. So, it's an authority granted to that person.

Commands given. The example that we repeated quite a bit is husband to wife. A wife is commanded to submit to her husband, but the husband does not have the authority of retribution, right?

To bring about some kind of punishment, right? It should bear on her conscience to listen to his counsel. But all he has in his authority is to counsel, right?

To give her good advice, godly advice, to plead with her to obey it. That's where that lies. So, the authority of command and the authority of counsel.

[9 : 40] And I think, it has been for me, all of this is a really helpful rubric for us to think about the world in which we live, right? How am I to submit? And what authority has been granted to me?

And if granted to me, how should I exercise that authority? A lot of frustration exists in our world, I think, because we don't have a clear view of the way God has delegated authority in our world.

Okay, so those are the reminders, those eight overarching assertions that have been made. So, let's think now, secondly, together, about government.

And I just want to unpack that sentence. So, if you have your bulletin, you can look at that sentence, and I'm just going to take it bit by bit. First part of that statement, we believe, and this is from our current confession, the CFC Statement of Faith, which is borrowed from the 1833 New Hampshire Confession.

So, it says this, We believe that civil government is of divine appointment for the interests and good order of human society.

[10 : 49] So, God creates and controls civil authorities for his glory in his global purpose. Divinely appointed, the governments are.

The scope of his working is impossible for us to fathom. There's times you just think, how could this possibly be the person elected? Could this be the Lord's will?

And the answer is, yes, it is. Do we fully understand why? Rarely these days, right? But nonetheless, we really can't deny that governments are of divine appointment and, generally speaking, are for the ordering of society.

The reason we can't deny it is because the scripture teaches it. So, first reference, Romans chapter 13. I'll read the first seven verses of that chapter.

Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God. And those that exist have been instituted by God.

[12 : 03] You see why I said there's no denying that fact? We are to be subject to governing authorities. For, this last half of verse 1, there is no authority except from God.

And those that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore, whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed. And those who resist will incur judgment.

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 good.

But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer. Therefore, one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God's wrath, but also for the sake of conscience.

For because of this, you also pay taxes. For the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing. Pay to all what is owed to them. Taxes to whom taxes are owed.

[13 : 07] Revenue to whom revenue is owed. Respect to whom respect is owed. Honor to whom honor is owed. So, when we re-engage in our study of Romans, which we'll be doing next week, Lord willing, we will soon have an opportunity to study this text further.

And we will. But just note, at this point in this confessional statement, that Paul is calling Christians generally to submit to governmental authority.

So, we believe that civil government is of divine appointment, whether we understand it or not, for the interests and good order of human society.

Next part of the phrase. And that magistrates are to be prayed for, conscientiously honored and obeyed.

So, there's commands that we ought to pray for those who are in charge. And I must admit that I am far too guilty of talking about those who are in charge and not praying for them.

[14 : 15] I, as an individual, need to be better about this. We, as a church, need to be better about this. 1 Timothy chapter 2, verse 1 and 2. First of all, then I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way.

Right? I think there's a couple of things going on in this text. I think we're meant to be praying for those who are in power so that they will make decisions that lend towards peaceful and quiet, godly, and dignified lives.

When society is ordered as society ought to be ordered, it is much easier for those who claim the name of Christ to live lives in this way. But also, I think that Paul means for us to see that if we are praying for those who are in power, we are much more likely to find ourselves living these kinds of lives in response.

It is difficult to be indignant towards somebody that you're carrying before the throne of God. So we are to pray for those who are in charge.

And we are to conscientiously honor them and obey them. 1 Peter 2, verses 13 and 14. Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good.

[15:48] So, for much of Christian history, and right now in much of the world, these kinds of commands, there's not much space for disobedience in them in those societies.

Ours is a bit different, and it raises some interesting questions. It actually seems to be the responsibility of good citizens to revolt at times. This very nation was founded, and there was a theological debate happening.

Was it appropriate or not to cast off England as a ruler? And people fell on both sides of that argument in that day. People fall on both sides of that argument in this day.

Was it proper for, was it biblically faithful to become a rebel and to fight against England? And I think it was, but I digress.

So, these are important questions for us to be asking and thinking about, but we have a bit of a luxury even to ask it, right? People in other places in the world are not living in any measure of righteous society, and yet have to consider what it means to be subject to a human institution, right?

[17:06] Magistrates are to be prayed for, they are to be honored, and they are to be obeyed. Accept, right? The next bit of the phrase. Accept only in things opposed to the will of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Not too many years ago, we were faced having to consider this very thing as governments across our nation shut down the meetings of people.

And this was not an easy thing to navigate. It was difficult. Was it reasonable? Was it unreasonable, right? I think there are times in which not gathering as people might be appropriate.

And we're not neglecting to gather as saints. And then there are times when it's not appropriate and not reasonable. And we had to navigate that gray area. What ought we do in this particular case?

But we have some more clear examples in the scripture, right? We have the examples of the apostles in Acts chapter 5. This is beginning in verse 27 when the captains with the opus questioned them, right?

[18:15] So they have already been beaten and told not to speak in the name of Christ, and they're doing it anyway, so they're re-arrested. And the council says this, we strictly charge you not to teach in this name, yet here you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and you intend to bring this man's blood upon us, speaking of Christ, right?

We told you not to do this thing, and yet you're doing it anyway. That is sharing the good news of Jesus. And Peter responds, this is Peter and the apostles, verse 29, we must obey God rather than men.

So that higher authority that all civil authority is subject to, we must obey God rather than men. And we have also, and most importantly, the example and teaching of Christ himself.

He said in Matthew 10 in verse 28, Christ was quite the rebel in his day. He said, Do not fear those who kill the body, but cannot kill the soul.

Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell. So there's a higher authority than those civil authorities.

[19:34] So we're to obey except only in things opposed to the will of our Lord Jesus Christ. Charles Spurgeon, this is on the back of your bulletin, once said, There are points of inevitable contact between the higher and lower spheres.

So he's saying God's authority and lower authority. Inevitable contact between the higher and lower spheres. Points where politics persist in coming into collision with our faith.

And there we shall be traitors both to heaven and earth. If we consult our comfort by sinking into the rear. So he's saying if we appease our comfort by shrinking back when we ought to press forward.

But traitors both to heaven, to God and our allegiance to him, and to earth, the good of mankind, if we don't press back against.

So there's this huge spectrum in Christendom, right? People on the one end of the spectrum who would focus most of their energy on being politically involved and bringing about the temporal good of the place in which they live.

[20 : 46] There are churches that are in some sense political packs, right? They get together and speak about how they're going to be involved. And that's the extent of what they do together. It's a bit of a mission drift, I would argue, for the church.

On the other end of the spectrum, there are those who would be gospel only, they would suggest. So we'll not be involved at all. There are Christians in this country who don't vote.

They don't want to be encumbered by the affairs of this world and have nothing to do with it whatsoever. And would say the only thing that we ought to do, both as a church collective and as individuals sent from it, is share the good news of Jesus.

I think, I believe I'm thinking clearly about it, that the truth is somewhere in the middle of that spectrum. That we are for sure meant to be gospel proclaimers.

We are to obey God rather than men. We are not to shrink back, as Charles Spurgeon says, sink to the rear. But the degree in which we are involved in politics, I find, is fairly limited.

[21 : 56] Last part of the phrase. So they bring back this divinely appointed, right?

We must obey Christ first because he rules over all who he's delegated authority to. So you may be familiar with Psalm chapter 2.

This is the first half of it. The psalmist says, why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? It's a rhetorical question.

Why? Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth set themselves and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against his anointed.

We know this to be Christ. I find this psalm so comforting, right?

[23 : 02] As we see the world. I mean, not just our country, but so many countries in such political turmoil and upheaval, right? All of this rejection of God's good authority, right?

Let's cast them off. Let's burst their bonds. But God laughs at it, right? It's laughable to him that they think they can avoid his authority.

The Lord holds them in derision, the rest of verse 4 says. Then he will speak to them in his wrath and terrify them in his fury, saying, and here's what God the Father responds to this kind of rebellion with.

As for me, I have set my king on Zion, my holy hill. The Lord Jesus Christ, I say to you, presently reigns and is bringing all things into subjection under himself and will one day set all things right and reign forever.

So we have such comfort as we think about how it is that we are to engage with civil authority. But, oh, all the situational complexities of living out the summary teaching of this statement.

[24 : 21] But I will digress at this point, right? We can have a book club and talk about all of the complications if you would like. Again, let's be thinking through this biblical rubric.

And if you'd like to join me, we can study it further together. So, simple thoughts for a complex world that I hope will help us live godly lives in this age.

Third thing I want to do together is bring back this overarching assertion that I made. It was the third one that I made, which was, humankind has an authority problem.

So the whole idea of this topic of authority came up because we were being asked to teach more about congregationalism. Some of you wanted a clearer understanding of that.

And I hope we have in some measure given that to you. But authority is a good thing for us to think about because of this authority issue that we have. To really consider whether or not we are good at submitting ourselves to proper authority.

[25 : 32] And I find that we are generally not. As Americans, it is ingrained into us to have a sense of rogue individualism. It's part of our culture, which isn't all bad.

Our experiment in ordered liberty certainly has sentiment that leans heavy on the liberty portion of that equation. If you get into much of a political conversation with me, I typically plant my flag as a libertarian.

Not the totality of the libertarian platform. But that's kind of where I lean off into. In the idea of ordered liberty, I want more liberty and less order.

It's part of who we're built to be as Americans. Additionally, we have all seen authority abused. We can observe it from afar.

It's happening all the time. And many of you have experienced firsthand the abuse of authority. And you have a lot of deep, understood hurt because of abused authority.

[26 : 37] And so we just have reason to be suspect of it. Beyond all of this, though, at our very core, apart from the redemptive work of Jesus Christ, we're rebellious people.

Those of us who are in Christ have been set free from the bondage of sin. Those who are not in Christ, though, I mean, that is what you do. Having been set free from it, we do still sin. We still rebel because at our very core, that's who we are in the fall.

And you can trace the biblical narrative. It's everywhere in the scripture, this kind of rebellion. You go backwards. New Testament churches not heeding the words of the apostles.

Many of the letters that Paul wrote were reminding people of the things that they were meant to be doing. The Jewish people again and again and again reject the teaching of Christ.

And they crucify him for what they believe to be blasphemy. Israel over and over turn away from the prophets. They don't take care with their temple worship.

[27 : 45] They neglect driving out the people from the promised land as they were commanded. They refuse to fight for fear. They desecrate holy places and on and on and on.

It's one of the themes of the Old Testament. This rebellious people that God loves anyway. And all of it finds its beginning with our first parents.

With Adam and Eve. The original rebels. Who doubted God's good authority in Genesis chapter 3. And so Paul says in Romans 3 verse 10 and following.

None is righteous. No, not one. No one understands. No one seeks for God. All have turned aside. Together they have become worthless.

No one does good. Not even one. Their throat is an open grave. They use their tongues to deceive. The venomous ass is under their lips. Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness.

[28 : 46] Their feet are swift to shed blood. In their paths are ruin and misery. And the way of peace they have not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes.

No one seeks for God. The end of verse 11. All have turned aside. They've turned away from the way of God. There is no fear of God before their eyes.

Right? Prior to Christ. This is the state. Right? Rebellion. And the response. The right and proper response is repentance and faith.

That we would turn away from our disobedience. Recognize it as rebellion. A great offense against an authoritative God. A good God who's given us commands.

That we would say, I haven't submitted myself to your good authority. Right? I am wicked therefore. And I need to turn from that. Place my faith in Jesus Christ.

[29 : 51] My belief in Him. His person. And in His work. Right? His accomplished law keeping. His sacrificial death on my behalf. And submit myself to your law.

Being set free from the power of sin. Being made new in Christ. Putting off the old self. Putting on the new. Placing myself under good authority.

And I want to suggest to you that repentance and faith necessitates submission. If we are in fact in Christ, we will find our lives in varied degree.

Having been justified, we will be sanctified. Our lives will grow in holiness. Grow in submission to God's law. A really interesting case.

This is Luke chapter 7. It's the story of the centurion when Jesus meets him in Capernaum. We can read beginning in verse 2. Now a centurion had a servant who was sick and at the point of death who was highly valued by him.

[31 : 00] When the centurion heard about Jesus, he sent to him elders of the Jews asking him to come and heal his servant. And when they came to Jesus, they pleaded with him earnestly saying, He is worthy to have you do this for him for he loves our nation and he is the one who built us our synagogue.

So significant centurion, right? A commander of troops. A Roman citizen who was sympathetic towards the plight of the Jews.

And Jesus went with them. When he was not far from the house, the centurion sent friends saying to him, Lord, do not trouble yourself for I am not worried to have you come under my roof.

Therefore, I did not presume to come to you. But say the word and let my servant be healed. So he doesn't want to inconvenience Jesus in the travels.

Then he says this, For I too am a man set under authority with soldiers under me. And I say to one, go, and he goes.

[32 : 04] And to another, come, and he comes. And to my servant, do this, and he does it. So note what he's saying. He's saying, look, I'm a man with authority. I'm under authority, and I have authority, and I recognize that you are a man with authority.

That's what he's saying, right? When Jesus heard these things, he marveled at him. He's marveling at the centurion's submission.

And turned to the crowd that followed him, said, I tell you, not even in Israel have I found such faith. Jesus ties the idea of faith, believing in who Christ is, with submission to him.

And then just in case you don't know the story, verse 10 says, And when those who had been sent returned to the house, they found the servant well. So we have this wonderful example of the centurion and Jesus tying these ideas together.

But we have also, and more importantly, the example of Christ. God himself. God in flesh. John chapter 4 and verse 31.

[33 : 19] In your reading of the Gospel of John, look for this theme. It's repeated again and again and again. Verse 31, we see the disciples urging Jesus to eat. They're trying to get him to nourish his physical body.

But he said to them, verse 32, I have food to eat that you do not know about. So the disciples said to one another, Has anyone brought him something to eat? And Jesus said to them, My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work.

So we have in Christ a picture of, a perfect picture, of submission to the authority placed over him. Now, I have found myself to be a bit of an outside-the-box type of person.

And just in my personal life, I think in the way that God wired me, I question everything and obnoxiously question everything.

So I want to read to you a little bit from the Jonathan Lumen book that I've referenced to you. What piqued my interest to actually pick it up and read it, I've been thinking about authority for quite some time.

[34 : 31] We had actually decided to do this series on authority before this book ever was released. But I heard an interview with him. And in that interview, he was talking about his own experience, just kind of being kind of a rebellious personality.

And I really resonated with that. He has, though, a particular situation in which he decided to submit. So I think it's helpful, and I don't. I think it just little bit, little bit, little bit over time.

God taught me lessons about submission to authority. But I think his example is helpful. It was, to me at the very least, I hope it will be to you. So just listen to what Lumen says.

He says, sometime, and let me preface this. Jonathan Lumen is going to talk about moving to D.C. And he went to Capitol Hill Baptist Church. And the pastor there is Mark Dever. He just calls him Mark. But that's who he's talking about.

Sometime in my junior high years, I became aware of how much my brain bent toward nonconformity. The kids in the youth group were discussing a political matter.

[35 : 31] And I found myself arguing for a position I didn't believe, merely because something in me needed to oppose the room's consensus. Part of that need to oppose, I believe, is my brain's...

And then search for a synthesis. But another part of that instinct was just plain old immaturity and sin. Something in me enjoyed standing alone and standing against.

I think my heart found a sense of purpose and worth in thinking of myself as courageous in these stances. So, if I was in a room of Democrats, I would argue like a Republican.

And if I was in a room of Republicans, I would argue like a Democrat. To be sure, this nonconformist tendency helped me academically in high school, college, and graduate school. I wrote good papers.

Gratefully, I also had patient parents. In my early 20s, I moved to Washington, D.C. And for the first time in my life, joined a church. Still, I was that guy.

[36 : 28] The guy who asked persnickety questions in Bible study. The guy who pestered the pastor with what ifs. The guy who always thought he knew better. And if you at that point think that that could be you, it is.

I had a high opinion of myself since I did well in school. In fact, the friend who told me about the D.C. church mentioned that it had a brilliant pastor. And I said to myself, this is sincerely embarrassing to admit.

We'll see. A year or two into my membership, the church voted on a batch of brand new elders who had been nominated by the same pastor, Mark. The Constitution required 75% approval from the congregation.

Yet all five received somewhere between 69 and 74% of the vote, meaning all five failed. The congregation was shocked. We wondered what the pastor would do next.

Two weeks later, we found out. He announced he was again nominating the Save Five Men. What? Are you kidding me? That was my internal response. The congregation voted, buddy.

[37 : 34] You lost. And you're the one who taught me to be a congregationalist. Now you want to call a redo because you didn't get the results you wanted? Sorry, pal. No way. My nonconformist instincts were in full flare.

I had voted for three of the five candidates the first time around, but now I would protest vote against all five. This pastor, Mark, was a jerk and a tyrant. Shortly after the announcement, Mark hosted a question and answer time on a Sunday afternoon concerning his renominations.

I attended. Standing before God as our one pastor, he said he could not in good conscience put another slate of men in front of us. Therefore, he offered, I'm asking you to trust me.

He said this meekly and gently, yet he said it clearly and directly. You might expect my heart to have gone into rebellion hyperdrive at that moment, but for some reason, somehow, it didn't.

His request made sense. It landed softly on my heart. He is my pastor, I thought. I should trust him. You might call this my rich young ruler's moment.

[38 : 46] I didn't have much money to give up, but I did have a high opinion of myself. And I sensed the Lord Jesus saying to me, Jonathan, if you want to follow me, follow Pastor Mark. Yet unlike the New Testament's rich young ruler, I surrendered myself and followed.

God's spirit was at work. A week or two later, I voted for all five men, and enough people joined me that all five passed the 75th. How good that was for the life of that church. Not only that, my life began changing.

I changed from non-conformist to team player, from rebel to disciple, from raising my hand to stump the pastor, to raising my hand to ask a question that might help the group.

I began to grow in the faith, fighting sin, reading the Bible, wanting to do good in the lives of my fellow church members. Sometimes I wonder if that whole affair was when I actually became a Christian.

Something else changed. Little by little, I began receiving opportunities to lead in the church. First, it was a Bible study for other single men, then co-teaching a Sunday school class, then a deacon of member care, tasked with visiting older members and distributing the church's benevolence fund.

[39 : 54] Finally, I became a pastoral intern and was sent to seminary, paid for by the church, and became an elder at that same church after seminary. Before heading off to seminary, I remember reflecting back on what God had done in my life over the previous few years.

This thought struck me. Submission to Mark and other men in my life had led to my growth. Not only that, nobody had ever told me how powerful submission is for spiritual growth.

Why hadn't I heard a sermon on that? Evangelical Christians in America are missing this amazing gift. I concluded. So, at least a path to godly growth is submission to God's godly authority.

Perhaps in some frail measure over these past four weeks, I have now helped you to see the good that submission to godly authority can bring in your life. And I hope that we will all be a people.

May our church be characterized by godly authority and godly submission for the protection of the vulnerable, for the strengthening of communities, and of the promotion of human flourishing to the glory of our great God.

[41 : 10] Let's pray together. Thank you.