

Respect for Authority

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For the last year and a half or so, we have been engulfed in this Covid flu epidemic and it has taken a tremendous toll on the country. It has done so much damage and killed many, many people. It's been called a pandemic because it is so widespread. Our daughter and her whole family went to a church camp and someone came who was infected and they all came back with the flu. It's so much on our minds.

But there is another epidemic that is even more damaging to us as God's people because it's not only physical but is also spiritual. It is a terrible growing epidemic of disrespect for authority. Disrespect for authority is a growing disease in our society today and in much of the world; one that is growing ever more rapidly it seems. Especially during the last government administration, it became epidemic. Especially after the last two presidential elections. It's a spiritual disease, the growing lack of respect for authority of all kinds. It is towards government officials, courts, police, military, teachers, in the home and most importantly of all, disrespect for God and His laws and what God commands us.

Permissiveness is a lack of discipline in schools and it is being taught to our children. Our children are being taught to have a lack of respect for authority. Police officers are called "pigs" or sometimes shot at, shot by snipers. We have another kind of disrespect being shown to our last President. On CNN there was a facsimile of a decapitated head of President Trump. Then there was the play in New York City depicting the assassination of President Trump.

Currently there is much disrespect toward our present President. Many people disagree with things he has done, just as they did with the last president. But the President is the leader of our country and that demands respect. Rioters last summer reported to have done two billion dollars in damage to 1500 locations. Parts of cities were taken over like the Capitol Hill district in Seattle, taken over by the rioters. The Bible gives us a very accurate picture of these conditions. Turn to 2 Timothy 3:1. This was read in the last message but I think it sets a time frame that we need to repeat it.

2 Timothy 3:1 *But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come:*

2) For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,

3) unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good,

4) traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God,

5) having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!

6) For of this sort are those who creep into households and make captives of gullible women loaded down with sins, led away by various lusts,

7) always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. (NKJV)

As I mentioned, this really points to the time that we are in. It points to us being in the end time. I would like to begin by going back to Exodus 20:12.

Exodus 20:12 *Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the LORD your God is giving you. (NKJV)*

This is the scripture that we all know by heart and is part of God's Ten Commandments; *honor your father and your mother*. This is where respect for authority starts—in the home. The Bible expands this greatly. It's just one of God's basic laws that expands to many parts of our lives.

One time my wife and I were visiting our daughter, Dorothy and her family. Karen asked one of our youngest granddaughters to do something and she refused. When Dorothy told her to obey her grandmother, her response was, "The Bible tells me I have to obey my mother and dad—my parents—it doesn't say I have to obey my grandparents." Dorothy set her straight on that very quickly and that was the end of that discussion. The Ten Commandments are concise statements of principles that God gives us. They have a broad application in every area of our lives. Christ gave some examples of this expansion. Look at Matthew 5:21.

Matthew 5:21 *You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.'*
22) But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, 'Raca!' shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be in danger of hell fire. (NKJV)

Skipping down to verse 27 for another example.

27) You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not commit adultery.'
28) But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. (NKJV)

So, the fifth commandment—honoring parents—is a basic principle but it expands to all authority. Showing honor to every kind of authority. Some of the things I would like to talk about today. What is required of a person who has respect for authority and what are some things we accomplish by being a person who has respect for authority. I'd like to look at 1 Peter 5:5.

1 Peter 5:5 *Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders. Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for*

God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble." (NKJV)

Back up just a page, in my Bible, to 1 Peter 2:13.

1 Peter 2:13 *Therefore submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether to the king as supreme,
14) or to governors, as to those who are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and for the praise of those who do good.
15) For this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men—
16) as free, yet not using liberty as a cloak for vice, but as bondservants of God.
17) Honor all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king.
18) Servants, be submissive to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the harsh.
19) For this is commendable, if because of conscience toward God one endures grief, suffering wrongfully.
20) For what credit is it if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God.
21) For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps:
22) Who committed no sin, Nor was deceit found in His mouth";
23) who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously; [Which is God the Father] (NKJV)*

Perhaps it is as much a message of humility as it is about respect for authority. The two are so completely entwined. The thought patterns of our minds really are a starting point for humility and also for respect for authority. Some of the scriptures tell us about that. I would like to look at just a couple examples.

Micah 6:8.

Micah 6:8 *He has shown you, O man, what is good;
And what does the LORD require of you
But to do justly,
To love mercy,
And to walk humbly with your God? (NKJV)*

Matthew 18:1-4.

Matthew 18:1 *At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, "Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?"
2) Then Jesus called a little child to Him, set him in the midst of them,
3) and said, "Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven."*

4) Therefore, whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. (NKJV)

No disrespect for authority has ever been caused by humility—just the opposite. It has been caused by the lack of humility. Christ told us that unless we become as little children, we will by no means enter the Kingdom of heaven. That’s an amazingly difficult thing for our minds to fathom—something to achieve, it’s not natural. It’s not natural to our minds. What is natural is ego and vanity. It’s only through God’s Spirit that we can overcome and this takes a great deal of prayer and meditation. As a starting point, it’s really developing a humble mind.

There’s an anonymous saying that I came across that I think is profound.

Watch your thoughts, they become your words. Watch your words, they become your actions. Watch your actions, they become your habits. Watch your habits they become your character. Watch your character it becomes your destiny.

So, what is our destiny? Either the Kingdom of God or not. Moving on, having a Godly respect for authority, what can that accomplish through us? The fifth commandment ends with, “...that your days may be long in the land which the LORD God gives you.” And the opposite is implied. Without respect for those over you, God won’t allow us to remain in the land that He gives us. That is a threat that is unwinding before our very eyes in our country and many places in the world.

Authority is allocated by God and God doesn’t stand for that authority to be disrespected. The natural mind wants to usurp that authority. Look at Numbers 12 as an example.

Numbers 12:1 *Then Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married; for he had married an Ethiopian woman.*
2) *So, they said, Has the LORD indeed spoken only through Moses? Has He not spoken through us also?” And the LORD heard it. [So, they were usurping authority]*
3) *(Now the man Moses was very humble, more than all men who were on the face of the earth.)*
4) *Suddenly the LORD said to Moses, Aaron, and Miriam, Come out, you three, to the tabernacle of meeting!” So the three came out.*
5) *Then the LORD came down in the pillar of cloud and stood in the door of the tabernacle, and called Aaron and Miriam. And they both went forward.*
6) *Then He said, Hear now My words: If there is a prophet among you, I, the LORD, make Myself known to him in a vision; I speak to him in a dream.*
7) *Not so with My servant Moses; He is faithful in all My house.*
8) *I speak with him face to face, even plainly, and not in dark sayings; And he sees the form of the LORD. Why then were you not afraid to speak against My servant Moses?”*
9) *So, the anger of the LORD was aroused against them, and He departed.*

10) And when the cloud departed from above the tabernacle, suddenly Miriam became leprous, as white as snow. Then Aaron turned toward Miriam, and there she was, a leper. (NKJV)

An example here, God comes down hard especially for disrespect for authority or trying to usurp authority that is not ours. God hates rebellion and He hates rebellion for a very good reason. Isaiah 14:12.

Isaiah 14:12 *How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning!
How you are cut down to the ground, you who weakened the nations!
13) For you have said in your heart: I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation On the farthest sides of the north;
14) I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the Most High.
(NKJV)*

So here Satan was rebelling against the very God of the universe and wanting to take over His authority. Lucifer became Satan and actually a third of the angels ended up following him. God is now creating spirit beings on a higher level and in doing so, He has to realize what happened with Satan. God is taking a risk. I would like to turn to Hebrews 2:5.

Hebrews 2:5 *For He has not put the world to come, of which we speak, in subjection to angels.
6) But one testified in a certain place, saying: What is man that You are mindful of him, Or the son of man that You take care of him?
7) You have made him a little lower than the angels; You have crowned him with glory and honor, And set him over the works of Your hands.
8) You have put all things in subjection under his feet.”
For in that He put all in subjection under him, He left nothing that is not put under him. But now we do not yet see all things put under him. (NKJV)*

God is in the process of putting all things under those that are going to enter His Kingdom. God is taking a risk. There is a great danger in creating spirit beings that have all the power and the ability of a God or a member of the God family. Human authority in this age is testing our attitude; testing the attitude that God is looking for in us. God has ordained that we have to pass this test if we are going to be a part of His Kingdom. We see the lack of authority all around us. We have to recognize it. We have to very careful not to be caught up in it. It's so easy to be caught up in things we see all around us.

We are in training. God is allowing us to observe this rebellion firsthand in our society to see the tremendous evil that is being caused by it. Hence Christ's statement that if we are to enter His Kingdom—the Kingdom of God—we are going to have to become completely humble as a little child and completely respectful. As we read in 1 Peter 5, being submissive to one another and clothed with humility.

We need to do that,

for God resists the proud and gives grace to the humble.

If we are humble and submissive, it would be much more natural to be humble and submissive to one another, which is also part of what we have to achieve. What is involved in being a person who respects authority? The saying that I quoted earlier lays out some principles. Watch what you think. Harboring negative thoughts is where it all begins. We tend to justify our feelings—that is part of our human nature. Instead we need to examine our feelings. Are the feelings we have the one's God wants us to have? Philippians 4:8.

Philippians 4:8 *Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things. (NKJV)*

These are the things that God wants us to have in our minds, to incorporate as part of our very being. Thoughts lead to words so we have to watch what we say. Titus 3:1.

Titus 3:1 *Remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities, to obey, to be ready for every good work,
2) to speak evil of no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing all humility to all men. (NKJV)*

Thoughts lead to deeds, to what we say. If you harbor a thought or something evil towards someone, something that somebody has done to you, pretty soon you'll just think of something else to add to that—another misdeed and another and pretty soon a much worse attitude is conjured up toward a person. We have to watch what we say in private. This is where a lot of wrong attitudes begin or first slip out. Eric Hoffer in his book, *True Believer*, said that when we have a complaint about something or someone, we tend to find allies—people who agree with us. This is part of our nature which soothes our conscience. It is human nature but it's not God's nature. Condoning negative thoughts and trying to justify them becomes a habit. It's a habit that we can't allow ourselves to be caught up in. If you do, there goes your destiny in the Kingdom of God.

Let's look at Romans 13:1.

Romans 13:1 *Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God.
2) Therefore, whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves. (NKJV)*

Authority is from God; a purpose not only to teach us but also to test us. There comes a time when sometimes we have to disobey authority. There are examples of that in the Bible. A prime example is in Daniel 3:1.

Daniel 3:1 *Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold, whose height was sixty cubits and its width six cubits. He set it up in the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon.*

2) And King Nebuchadnezzar sent word to gather together the satraps, the administrators, the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the judges, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces, to come to the dedication of the image which King Nebuchadnezzar had set up. (NKJV)

Down to verse 4.

4) Then a herald cried aloud: To you it is commanded, O peoples, nations, and languages,

5) that at the time you hear the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre, and psaltery, in symphony with all kinds of music, you shall fall down and worship the gold image that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up; (NKJV)

Skipping ahead to verse 16.

16) Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter.

17) If that is the case, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king. (NKJV)

They had to respectfully disagree because they wanted to obey God rather than some pagan image, which is contrary to God's command. Down in verse 21.

21) Then these men were bound in their coats, their trousers, their turbans, and their other garments, and were cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace. (NKJV)

In that case, we all remember the story, God did send an angel that delivered them from the fire. When told not to preach Jesus Christ, Peter and the apostles replied to the High Priest, we ought to obey God rather than men. As we read in 1 Peter 2, we are subject to the ordinance of man. If we must disobey man's ordinance to obey God, we are still subject to that ordinance. We need to disobey respectfully, not in anger; we need to do it humbly. But we are still subject to the consequences just as Shadrach, Meshack and Abed-Nego were. Luke 12:4-5.

Luke 12:4 *And I say to you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do.*

5) But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear Him who, after He has killed, has power to cast into hell; yes, I say to you, fear Him! (NKJV)

We need to fear God the Father because He is able to save us eternally, no matter what man can do to us. God has authority over eternal life. 1 Peter 2:15 tells us that...

.. this is the will of God, that by doing good, you put to shame the ignorance of foolish men.

I'd like to turn to Matthew 5:13.

Matthew 5:13 *You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men.*

14) You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden.

15) Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house.

16) Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven. (NKJV)

We are to be a light to the world in these difficult times. We are to be a light by showing respect for authority, by obeying God rather than man, if it comes to that. Most of all, we are in a training program that God has ordained in preparation for our being part of His family. God told Ancient Israel that He put before them good and evil and to choose the good. He's doing the same thing for us today. He's putting before us, good and evil, that we can witness and commanding us to choose the good. The good we must choose, as God tells us, is to be clothed with humility, to be submissive and respectful to all authority and to one another.