

“Authority & Submission in Christ”

God’s Word says that He makes His watchman accountable for the blood of the wicked man. God says that everyone must submit to the governing authorities. God even says, “whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven ...”

Tell me, do such words make you uncomfortable – do they grate on your ears so that you want them to stop – or run away from them? The temptation for the Christian is to side-step such words in favor of something **more positive** and **less abrasive.**

However, God’s Word is a life-giving Word. He gives us His Word for our benefit – and not just ours – but for the benefit of the whole world. All His Word are given for the sake of the Gospel – the “good news” of our Lord – the Gospel of our life and salvation.

But what is this Gospel? Maybe you have heard that John 3:16 is the “Gospel in a nutshell. “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.” Did you hear what God’s love consists of? It consists of the giving of His only-begotten Son – giving Him to suffer and die in our place.

All too often when Christians talk about love, it is different than the love of God that is in Christ Jesus. It is not a love that consists of sacrifice, blood, and death. The words of Jesus from last week’s Gospel reading comes to mind – they are not setting their minds on the things of God, but on the things of men.

According to God’s economy – His way of arranging and managing things – He gives some to be IN authority, and some to be UNDER authority. According to our God-given station (or place) in life – at times we may be in authority – and at other times, we may be under authority. For many people – they live both IN and UNDER authority at the same time – because we all have a variety of vocations in life.

Now, when it comes to authority – rarely do we have a problem with it – AS LONG AS we are the one in authority! But submission and being under authority is like an allergy to our rebellious, sinful nature.

Daily we are confronted with God's creation and design for authority and submission. Husbands are given authority – and wives are to submit themselves to their husbands, as to the Lord. Parents are given authority over their children – and their children are commanded by God to honor and obey their parents. The hearers of God's Word are told to obey their pastors and submit to their authority – and at the same time God charges the pastors to keep watch over them, as men who must give an account.

We see God's design of authority and submission in our text for today as well – where we are commanded to submit to the governing authorities who are God's servants – and we are warned that when we rebel against their authority, we are rebelling against that which God Himself has instituted – rebelling against that which God has established, for our good.

What the Lord would have us understand – and believe – is that whether we are IN authority or UNDER authority --- all authority belongs to Him, and therefore, we need not fear!

The truth, however, is that we do – we do fear those given to be in authority over us. We are afraid that our husband will abuse the authority given to him, and we will be harmed. We fear that those who govern will not use their authority wisely, and we will suffer. We fear parents and pastors because we don't always like what they have to say.

Dear children of God, "do not fear." Instead of fear – consider Jesus – "who being in the very form of God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made Himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to death – even death on a cross!"

Jesus Christ, true God – who has authority over all creation – is Himself placed under the authority of the Father, and willingly submits to His will. Jesus doesn't submit because the Father promises that everyone placed in authority over Him will be faithful – or that no harm will come His way – or that His vocation will be an "easy one."

No, Jesus willingly submits to authority because it is the will of His loving Father that He should suffer and die, so that the world might have life through Him.

Think about it. Jesus submits to the false charges and blasphemy of the “pastors” of His day. He submits Himself to the governing authority (Pontius Pilate) – who, in essence, commends those who do evil – and punishes Jesus, the Innocent One, for doing good.

Jesus submits Himself to death on the cross – and this He does for us – who constantly rebel against our Father who dearly loves us – and against His will, and arrangement of our lives, which is for our good.

“But that’s different!”, we cry, “because Jesus knew what would happen to Him, that He would be raised to life again on the third day.” That’s true. Jesus knew that His Father would not abandon Him to the grave, but would raise Him up. And so do YOU!

Already you have been raised from death to life – because you are baptized into Christ’s death and resurrection. And because you are IN CHRIST – your body too will be raised from death to life on the Last Day.

Dearly beloved, do not fear the authority the Lord gives – and the submission He calls you to – for it is Christ who rules and reigns over all things – who is at work in all that He has instituted.

Yes, injustices will come your way. Fellow sinners will abuse the authority given to them and you may suffer – and others may rebel against the authority God has called you to exercise for their good – but in the midst of all this, Jesus says, “I am with you” – “I am with you always, even unto the end of the age” – “where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”

Jesus comes to dwell in the midst of you this very day. By His authority, He forgives all your sin. He gives you His Body and Blood to strengthen and preserve you in this life. He continues to be with you – working all things for your good – guaranteeing by His death and resurrection, your resurrection and everlasting life.

To this, His authority, we willingly submit – confessing that it is true, gracious, and for our good. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, guards your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.