

January 13, 2008 by Steve Brandon



You and Your Authorities

1 Peter 2:13-15

Submit to your authorities, ...

1. For the Lord's sake (verses 13-14)
2. For the Lord's will (verse 15)

I want to begin my message by having you think all of the people in your lives who have been placed in authority over you. All of us have government officials who are over us. We all are subject to the authority of policemen. We all have church leaders to which we are called to submit. Some of you in the workforce have a boss who has authority over you. The president of your company has authority over you. Some of you are involved in organizations of some type: clubs or social groups or coops. Each of these organizations have an authority structure. We all have parents who have been placed in authority in our lives. The young people among us have teachers. Some of you young people who are on athletic teams have coaches.

Each of these people have a varying amount of authority over us. A policeman has a different authority over you than your boss does. Your parents have a different authority over you than your pastor. Some authorities are permanent in nature. Others may change from time to time. Some authorities have much authority. Others will have little authority. Additionally, every one of us have differing roles. A child may be under the authority of her parent, but may very well find herself employed as a baby sitter for an evening being in authority over the children in the home. The president of a company may serve the country as an election official, under the authorities of others.

At times, we are able to easily spot the authorities in our lives by the way that they dress. The referee dresses in a black and white striped shirt and holds a whistle in his mouth. The policeman dresses in his uniform with a badge. The judge dresses in a robe and sits above the courtroom.

It is no accident that all of us have authority figures in our lives. God has established this universe with authority and submission to that authority at the heart of how He created this world. Anarchy is not God's plan. Rather, He has established this world with certain ones who have authority and certain ones who are called to submit to these authorities.

Authority in this universe isn't merely restricted to the human level. Authority also exists on the spiritual level. In several places, the Bible speaks of the "arch-angel," which implies that this angel is the "first angel" or the "highest angel." In other words, this is the "angel with authority" (1 Thess. 4:16; Jude 9). Jude identifies this arch-angel as Michael (Jude 9). Other angels are submissive to Michael.

Authority in this universe isn't merely restricted to this time. In the world to come, believers in Christ will be in authority over the angels, judging them (1 Cor. 6:3). In the world to come, some of us will be placed into positions of authority. Jesus said that there are some who will "be in authority over ten cities" (Luke 19:17). Others will have authority over "five cities" (Luke 19:19). This implies that others will be placed into positions of submission in eternity.

Perhaps what is most surprising to many people is that within the members of the Trinity, there is submission for all eternity. You need to hear this verse: 1 Corinthians 11:3, "I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman, and God is the head of Christ." "God is the head of Christ!" Somehow, in some way, the second member of the Trinity submits Himself to the first member of the Trinity.

In many ways, I believe that God has shown this to us, so that we might not come to despise authority. Because, quite frankly, we all struggle with our submission to the authorities that God has placed over our lives. To be sure, there may be seasons in which you find it easy to submit to those in authority over you, especially when you want to do the things that they instruct you to do. However, there are times in all of our lives, when our authorities request of us those things that we don't want to do.

Children, are there times in your lives when you don't really like what your parents are telling you to do? (Clean your room, clean the dishes, mow the lawn, ...) Athletes, are there times in your lives when you don't really like what your coach is telling you to do? (Shoot 100 free throws, run your wind sprints, dive for the loose ball, ...) Have you ever attended a ball game and witnessed the referee making a poor call in your own judgment? There are many in the crowd who find it difficult to submit to this authority at that moment. Those of you who work, are there times in your lives when your boss tells you to do things you don't like? ("You need to work an extra hour tonight." "You can't take vacation this summer due to the workload." "You need to work overtime this weekend.") It's in those times especially that we all need to remember Peter's words that found our text this morning.

1 Peter 2:13-15

Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority, or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right. For such is the will of God that by doing right you may silence the ignorance of foolish men.

The governing principle in these verses comes in the very first word in verse 13, "Submit." In fact, we see this word several other times in the greater context of our passage this morning. It comes up in chapter 2, verse 18, "Servants, be submissive to your masters will all respect." It comes up in chapter 3, verse 1, "Wives, be submissive to your own husbands." If you write in your Bibles, these would be a good words to circle. When you come back to 1 Peter in the future and you happen to fix your eyes on the last part of chapter 2, you will see this word "submit" jump out at you, signaling that this is a key to Peter's thought in this section of his letter.

Now, this Greek word translated, "submit" is *upotassw* (*hupotasso*), which comes from two Greek words that give us a great picture of the meaning of this word. The first word is *upo* (*hupo*), which is a preposition meaning, "under." The second word is, *tassw* (*tasso*), which means, "to order, place, or appoint." When you put these two words together, you get a good definition of the word, "to place under" or "to order oneself under" or "to line up under." In this case, Peter commands us to "line up under ... every human institution."

The scope of Peter's words here in verse 13 is very broad. "Every human institution" constitutes every authority that is in your life! If you are a student, God is calling you to "line up under your teacher." If you work for a boss, God is calling you to "line up under your boss." If you are a citizen, God is calling you to "line up under your policemen."

In the following sections, Peter will give us some practical ways that this manifests itself. In our text this morning, (verses 13-15), Peter will focus his attention upon applying this principle of submission to our governmental authorities. In verses 18-20, Peter will focus his attention upon applying the principle of submission to the master/slave relationship, which we can easily bring over into our boss/employee relationship. In chapter 3, verses 1-7, Peter applies the principle of submission in our marriages. And so, this entire section has to deal with submission. Submission to authority is God's plan for our lives. It's the way that He has made the universe to function smoothly. Whenever there is no authority, there is anarchy. And whenever there is anarchy, there is no peace. When there is no peace, nobody is happy, because nothing gets done. It is chaos. But, this is not the way that our Lord has created this universe. He has created it to functions smoothly.

And so, my exhortation to you this morning is this: Submit to your authorities. Do what they tell you to do. Do it well. Do it with joy, knowing that God calls you to submit to your authorities in your life.

Peter gives us two reasons why it is that we should do so. The first reason comes in verses 13 and 14. Submit to your authorities, ...

1. For the Lord's sake (verses 13-14)

Look there in verse 13, "Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution."

Submission to your authorities is the right thing to do. This is the sense of the phrase, "for the Lord's sake." We are His ambassadors. As we represent Him, we are to do so by submitting to our authorities. It gives testimony to our God.

Please remember, submission is a good thing. Jesus commended submission and Jesus demonstrated submission. He said, "Whoever wants to become great among you shall be your servant. Whoever wishes to be first among you shall be slave of all" (Mark 10:43-44). Jesus demonstrated the goodness of submission by submitting Himself to His heavenly father. He said, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to accomplish His work" (John 4:34). Jesus "placed Himself under" the authority of God, the Father. Likewise, our submission to our authorities is a good thing.

Notice how Peter's words here deal with the motive of our hearts and the disposition of our minds. When we submit to our authorities, it isn't because we are forced to do so. Rather, we do so willingly. This is the sense of Peter's words, "submit yourselves." Peter is instructing us to do so voluntarily. Our submission ought to come from our own desires. The idea here isn't that Peter is holding a gun to your chest and commanding you to submit. Rather, the idea here is that Peter has put his arm around you and reasoning with you to submit to your authorities with delight in your heart.

Perhaps even right now, there are some of you that are thinking of those authorities that you don't want to submit to. Some of you children may not want to be submitting to your parents. Some of you parents may not want to be submitting to your boss. Some of your wives may not want to be submitting to your husbands. But, God has called us to a life of submission. Perhaps you need to pray for your desire and ability to do so. My message isn't a message of self-help. Nor is it the Nike message, "just do it!" As in all my preaching, this is a message of grace. If the Lord has convicted your heart this morning that there are ways that you are failing to submit, pray to Him for strength to obey. Pray for desire. Pray for ability.

Peter continues in verse 13 with the example of government. He says, "submit yourselves ... to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority, or to governors as sent by him" (verses 13b-14a).

With these words, Peter is trying to be very broad in their application. We can easily extrapolate these verses to say, "whether to your president or to your United States' senators or to your state governors or to your state representatives or to your mayor or to the judges in this city or to city officials or to policemen or to security guards. We are called to submit to our government, whomever it may be that comes across your path.

Now, there may be times and seasons where this is easier to do than at other times. When the leaders of our country are moral people who are upholding God's laws by enacting legislation that are aligned with God's revelation, submission to our government is easy. When our supreme court is making righteous decisions, it is easier to submit to our government. When our homeland is secure and our economy is booming, it's not too hard to submit. Winning brings a healthy attitude to a sports team.

But, there may be times and seasons when this is very difficult. When our president is pro-choice, it becomes more difficult to submit to our government. When our congress raises taxes and takes away freedoms, it becomes more difficult to submit to our government. When our

economy is slow, it's easy to grumble against our leaders. Losing brings out all of the complainers on the team.

When the government appears to be against God, we might easily have the tendency to resist this call upon our lives to submit. When the government refuses to allow prayer in school, we don't want to submit to those rules. When the government won't allow the posting of the Ten Commandments in public places, we don't want to submit. When the government enacts hate-crimes legislation that possibly extend to preaching against sinful behavior, we don't want to submit.

But, Peter here makes no distinction here between righteous rulers and unrighteous rulers. He calls us to a life of willing submission to all of our governmental authorities. In Romans 13, we theological justification for such a broad-sweeping command.

Romans 13:1-2

Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God. Therefore whoever resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves.

Peter can call us to sweeping submission to our authorities, because God is behind each of them. To oppose your authorities is to oppose God, Himself. The next president of the United States will be God's man (or God's woman) who is appointed by God to rule over us. As we believe this, we must submit ourselves to our president.

Now, it's not that we are called to agree with everything. Nor are we called to give blind obedience to everything that our government tells us to do. There is a hierarchy of authority. God is over all authority. Should any authority in your life (whether governmental or parental or ecclesiastical) call you to do something that is contrary to Scripture, you are called to submit to the supreme authority and not to the delegated authority. Should the government demand from us something that God forbids or forbid something from us that God demands, then, we must disobey our authorities. Should the government command us to bow to our president as God, we would disobey our governmental authorities, bowing only to the Lord, our God. Should the government prohibit our assembling together, we would disobey our governmental authorities, gathering anyway. Should the government pass a law that says that you cannot evangelize other people, we would disobey.

This was Peter and John's dilemma. The Sanhedrin ordered them "not to continue teaching in the name [of Jesus Christ]" (Acts 5:28). They humbly replied, "We must obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29). In other words, they were compelled by Jesus to "go into all the world and make disciples" by proclaiming Christ (Matt. 28:18-20). And they suffered for it. They were flogged for their choice of action (Acts 5:40). Better to die at the hands of governmental officials that betray our Lord.

This is the exception to Peter's words here in this passage. But, unless you can find a verse in Scripture that prohibits what our government requires or that calls us to do what the government prohibits, then, God calls us to submit to our authorities. You can't get around Peter's words, "submit yourself for the Lord's sake to every human institution."

This is what Hananiah, Mishaël and Azariah faced (Dan. 1:6). You might know these three better as Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego (Dan. 1:7). They were model citizens, some of the Jewish elite who stood in the top of their class. None was found like Hananiah, Mishaël and Azariah (Dan. 1:19). And so, they entered the king's personal service. "Every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king consulted them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and conjurers who were in all his realm" (Dan. 1:20). These men fulfilled Proverbs 16:7, "When a man's ways are pleasing to the LORD, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him."

There was a day when Nebuchadnezzar erected a golden image, 90 feet high. When the music played, all in the kingdom were to "fall down and worship the golden image" (Dan. 3:9). But, Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego refused to worship the golden image (Dan. 3:14). Nebuchadnezzar called them into his presence to give an account for their disobedience. He threatened that their continued disobedience would have them to be "immediately ... cast into the midst of a furnace of blazing fire" (Dan. 3:15). These three men humbly replied, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to give you an answer concerning this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire; and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king. But even if He does not, let it be known to you, O king, that we are not going to serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up" (Dan. 3:16-18). Essentially, they were saying, "We must obey God rather than men" (cf. Acts 5:29).

Perhaps you know how the story ends. The music played. They refused to obey. And so, they were thrown into the furnace. But, God saved them from the furnace.

What sort of effect did this have? Nebuchadnezzar issued a proclamation that the one who "speaks anything offensive against the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego shall be torn limb from limb and their houses reduced to a rubbish heap" (Dan. 3:29). Better to die at the hands of governmental officials that betray our Lord. Again, there's the exception to Peter's command here.

But, rather than focusing on the exceptions to Peter's command, let's consider what he is calling us to do. He's calling us to complete, willing submission to every authority in our lives (unless we have good Biblical reasons why we ought not to do so). This call is astonishing when you realize the political situation of Peter's day.

When Peter wrote this epistle to the scattered believers, the emperor of the Roman Empire was a man named Nero. The great historian, Philip Schaff calls him, "one of the basest and vilest of tyrants. ... He heaped crime upon crime until he became a proverbial monster of iniquity." [\[1\]](#) Though the first five years of His reign (54-59 A.D.) were commendable, the last nine years of His reign were filled with terrible acts of violence. In the tenth year of his reign (64 A.D.), Rome burned to the ground. There were many in the days of Nero who accused him of ordering the burning of the city. Tacitus, a political figure and historian of Nero's day, tells of how "Robbers and ruffians were seen to thrust blazing brands into the buildings, and, when seized, they affirmed that they acted under higher orders." [\[2\]](#) Some have reasoned that Nero

burned the city " to gratify his ambition to rebuild Rome on a more magnificent scale, and to call it Neropolis" [\[3\]](#) (after himself).

When Nero was constantly suspected to have ordered the burning, he sought to divert the issue by blaming the Christians of the day. Christians were obvious targets for such an accusation. They despised the Roman gods. They professed an allegiance to a higher king than Caesar. They were under suspicions for their secret meetings. Many of the respected Roman politicians had slandered the Christian religion as mere superstition. And so, the time was ripe for Nero to find a scapegoat and blame the Christians for the burning of Rome. As a result, many Christians lost their lives. Christians were wrapped in the hides of wild beasts and torn to pieces by dogs. Christians were crucified. Christians were burned. This all took place, because of the cruelty of Nero, who ordered these awful things to take place.

Things climaxed one evening when Christians were hoisted upon poles all around Nero's own garden. Christians were covered with pitch and were set on fire, to serve as stadium lighting while they conducted chariot races. Nero, Himself, was holding the reigns of one of the chariots, as they raced around his garden, which was illumined by the burning Christians. Eventually, Peter would even be killed by the same persecution that Nero was authorizing.

In this context, it is amazing that Peter would even write such things, "submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority, or to governors as sent by him" (verses 13-14a). The government of Peter's day was far more godless than our government is. The issues that we deal with pale in insignificance compared with the issues that the early Christians were facing at the hands of their government. As far left as you see the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) to be, they would be to the far right in Nero's day. Had the ACLU been in existence in Peter's day, there is no doubt in my mind that they would have been the first ones to come to the political help of Christians.

By in large, we have a very good and helpful governmental system. Now, you may argue that our freedoms are slowly being taken away as our government gets larger and larger and larger. But, still, we have great freedom. We have great prosperity. However, our society would be greatly helped if our rulers would only understand the purpose of government in the first place (as given in verse 14). Governmental leaders are sent "for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right" (verse 14).

It is the role of the government to "punish evildoers." Unfortunately, in our land today, we attempt to "reform evildoers." We send them to jail and hope that they spend a lot of time thinking about their crimes, so that when they finally get out of prison, they are different. As we have seen in this country, by in large, this doesn't work. Certainly, it would be great if we could see criminals reformed. But, it's not the role of the government to reform criminals. Rather, it's the role of the government to "punish evildoers." This must be done quickly and effectively. As Solomon observed in Ecclesiastes 8:11, "Because the sentence against an evil deed is not executed quickly, therefore the hearts of the sons of men among them are given fully to do evil." As justice is delayed for years, it leads to more and more evil in our land. Such things are a failure of our judicial system.

Peter also says that the role of the government is to "praise those who do right." It's a good thing when the president of the United States calls people to the White House to honor them for a job well done. It's a good thing when cities honor outstanding citizens by naming streets after them. It's a good thing when buildings are named after good citizens. It's a good thing for schools to honor exemplary students in the National Honor Society. I believe that we could do more of these things and our world would be a better place. But, even when such things aren't done, Peter's call is for us to submit to our governing authorities, even when it is difficult for us to do so.

Submit to your authorities for the Lord's sake (verses 13-14). But, there is another reason why it is that we ought to submit to our authorities. Submit to your authorities, ...

2. For the Lord's will (verse 15)

This comes in verse 15, "For such is the will of God that by doing right you may silence the ignorance of foolish men." It is God's will for you to submit to your authorities. It cannot be more clearly said. "Such is the will of God." This refers back to our submission. Our submission to authorities is God's will for our lives.

I believe that Peter particularly has in mind here the difficult situation when others around you are finding reason why they ought not to submit to their authorities. When others are failing to do what is right, you are continuing on, doing what is right, trusting in the Lord to vindicate you.

We see this theme often in the context of these words. Peter is particularly concerned about those who are in situations where it is difficult to submit. In verse 18, Peter calls the servants to "be submissive to your masters ... not only to those who are good and gentle, but also to those who are unreasonable." "Servants, don't just submit to your authorities when it is easy for you to do. But, continue to do so even if you have an unreasonable master." In chapter 3, verse 1, we see the same thing with wives, who are called to submit to their husbands. Peter calls the wives to submit to their husbands, "even if any of them are disobedient to the word." (1 Peter 3:1). That is, even if it is difficult for you to submit because of the attitude and behavior of your husbands. This is still God's will for your life.

At the heart of all of this submission talk, Peter gave the example of our Lord. Verse 21 calls Him our "example." And how was Jesus our example? He "committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth. And while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously" (1 Peter 2:22-23).

Fathom what Jesus did. First of all, Jesus lived a perfect life. And then, He was falsely accused and found guilty in an illegal trial late at night. Finally, He was nailed to a cross by heartless men and left to die. While upon the cross, He continued to be mocked, "He saved others, He cannot save Himself" (Matt. 27:42). "If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross" (Matt. 27:40). "He trusts in God; Let God rescue Him now, if He delights in Him" (Matt. 27:43). When submission to the governmental authorities was most difficult, Jesus submitted as an example to us.

Peter didn't do so well at passing this test. Perhaps you remember the evening in which Jesus was arrested. The chief priests and elders of the people came out with a "large crowd" of people, armed with swords and clubs (Matt. 26:47). Judas identified Jesus with a kiss. And then, the crowd "laid hands on Jesus and seized Him" (Matt. 26:50). When Peter saw this with his own eyes, he wasn't thinking "submission to authorities." Rather, He was thinking "justice into my own hands." He "drew out his sword, and struck the slave of the high priest and cut off his ear" (Matt. 26:51; cf. John 18:10). Looking Peter in the eye, Jesus said, "Put your sword back into its place; for all those who take up the sword shall perish by the sword" (Matt. 26:52). Jesus submitted Himself to His authorities, but Peter did not.

By doing right, Jesus silenced the ignorance of foolish men. When Jesus finally died, the centurion who "saw what had happened" gave praise to God saying, "Certainly, this man was innocent" (Luke 23:47). And the crowds that had watched Jesus die returned home, beating their breasts in distress (Luke 23:48). The path to silencing these foolish men was submission to authority., which is exactly what Peter calls us to do here in verse 15.

Over the years, I have been in conversations with men who have had various run-ins with the law. With some of them, it has come to the point where they actually despise policemen. These men have believed that they have been treated unfairly. They feel like the police are corrupt, and they want nothing to do with them. They speak badly of them. For the most part, I believe that most of these men have been disobedient to the law and have been on the receiving side of their wrath (which they have believed to be unjust).

In these instances, I have often felt at a loss in these conversations, because my perspective is so different. I know that abuses exist in the law enforcement agencies. Rodney King was beaten just outside of our apartment complex. It was terrible what happened to him. And yet, I very much sympathize with the police who put themselves in harm's way every day. We simply don't know the real story behind many of these incidents of abuse. Thank the Lord that we live in a country where such abuses are taken very seriously. But, even if they weren't, we are still called to do what is right. We aren't to despise, complain, and hate our authority. We are called to "do right."

This is what David did. He was a man after God's own heart (1 Samuel 13:14, Acts 13:22), whom Samuel anointed as the next king of Israel (1 Sam. 16:13). And yet, it was King Saul who reigned at the time. David didn't prove in anyway insubordinate to the king. Soon after being anointed, it became obvious to all of David's abilities. Soon after slaying Goliath, the women sang, "Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands" (1 Sam. 18:7). When David's giftedness was beginning to demonstrate that he would be a great leader, Saul became very jealous.

Soon, David went into hiding to save his skin. But, Saul pursued him. On David's way out to the wilderness, he has helped by the priests at Nob. When Saul found out about it, he summoned Ahimelech to inquire why he had helped David escape. Ahimelech replied, "And who among all your servants is as faithful as David, even the king's son-in-law, who is captain over your guard, and is honored in your house?" (1 Sam. 22:14). But, Saul was so enraged that he had Ahimelech and eighty-four other priests at Nob killed for helping David (1 Sam. 22:18). On top of that, there were many others who were killed at Nob that day, "both men and women, children and infants" (1 Sam. 22:19). Saul was far from being a righteous king.

When David had fled, Saul took 3,000 men and headed off to the wilderness to chase David. At one point, David and his men hid in a cave near Engedi. In the providence of God, Saul came into the very cave to "relieve" himself (1 Sam. 24:3). In other words, he was using the cave as a port-a-potty. When David's men saw this, they wanted to kill Saul saying, "Behold, this is the day of which the LORD said to you, 'Behold; I am about to give your enemy into your hand, and you shall do to him as it seems good to you'" (1 Sam. 24:4). But David would have none of it. Instead, David "cut off the edge of Saul's robe" (1 Sam. 24:5).

When Saul left the cave, David immediately called out after him saying, "My lord the king! ... Why do you listen to the words of men, saying, 'Behold, David seeks to harm you'? Behold, this day your eyes have seen that the LORD had given you today into my hand in the cave, and some said to kill you, but my eye had pity on you; and I said, 'I will not stretch out my hand against my lord, for he is the LORD's anointed.' Now, my father, see! Indeed, see the edge of your robe in my hand! For in that I cut off the edge of your robe and did not kill you, know and perceive that there is no evil or rebellion in my hands, and I have not sinned against you, though you are lying in wait for my life to take it." (1 Sam. 24:8-11). When Saul realized what took place, he wept (1 Sam. 24:16) and went home (1 Sam. 24:22). By doing right, David silenced the ignorance of foolish men (1 Pet. 2:15).

A short time later, again, Saul was pursuing David in the wilderness, seeking to kill him. Like before, Saul took 3,000 of the choice men of Israel (1 Sam. 26:2). Saul and his men camped in the hill of Hachilah, which was near David's hiding place. And so, David went down into the camp by night and happened upon Saul, who "lay sleeping inside the circle of the camp with his spear stuck in the ground at his head" (1 Sam. 26:7). Abner, who was with Saul, urged David, saying, "Today God has delivered your enemy into your hand; now therefore, please let me strike him with the spear to the ground with one stroke, and I will not strike him a second time" (1 Sam. 26:8). But, David replied, "Do not destroy him, for who can stretch out his hand against the LORD's anointed and be without guilt? ... As the LORD lives, surely the LORD will strike him, or his day will come that he dies, or he will go down into battle and perish. The LORD forbid that I should stretch out my hand against the LORD's anointed; but now please take the spear that is at his head and the jug of water, and let us go. (1 Sam. 26:9-11).

David was able to do this because "a sound sleep from the LORD had fallen on them" (1 Sam. 26:12). David returned to the other side and stood on top of the mountain and shouted out to Saul's camp, "See where the king's spear is and the jug of water that was at his head. ... Why then is my lord pursuing his servant? For what have I done? Or what evil is in my hand? Now therefore, please let my lord the king listen to the words of his servant. If the LORD has stirred you up against me, let Him accept an offering; but if it is men, cursed are they before the LORD. In response, Saul said, "I have sinned. ... I have played the fool and have committed a serious error." Again, by doing right, David silenced the ignorance of foolish men (1 Pet. 2:15).

This is what we are called to do. We are called to "do what is right" even when our authorities are in the wrong. Paul says in Romans 12:21, "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good." Vengeance is the Lord's. Let Him deal with the injustices.

What was it that gave David reason to treat Saul like this? It was David's understanding of the sovereignty of God. "Saul is God's anointed.

I'm not going to touch Him." This same understanding will help us in submitting to our authorities. Consider Paul's words, ...

Romans 13:3-4

For rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil. Do you want to have no fear of authority? Do what is good and you will have praise from the same; for it is a minister of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath on the one who practices evil.

Twice in these verses, Paul identifies our law enforcement agency, "a minister of God." Literally, we read, a "deacon." That is, "one who serves." In this case, our policemen are serving God as they protect us. So, whenever you see a man with a badge, treat him with the same honor as you would a deacon in this church, because he is indeed God's minister. This is what allowed David to submit to Saul. He was God's anointed. This is what will allow you to submit to governmental authorities. They are God's ministers, who are given the responsibility to deal with the injustices of our society.

Let's return to the authorities in your life that you thought of at the beginning of my message. Are you submitting to them? Are you doing so with honor?

Since I have been pastoring this church, I have found out how difficult it is to lead people. There are times in which decisions are made that others don't agree with. In those situations, it is often difficult to handle then appropriately. But, in pastoring, I have also come to know how helpful it is to receive encouragement from others. As our children are involved in various activities, I'm constantly encouraging them to encourage those who work hard to lead them.

How about the authorities that God has placed in your life? Are you a delightful follower of those who lead you?

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on January 13, 2008 by Steve Brandon.
For more information see www.rvbc.cc.

[1] Philip Schaff, History of the Christian Church, Volume 1, p. 378.

[2] Ibid., p. 380.

[3] Ibid., p. 380.