

THE PASTORAL EPISTLES

God's Vision for the Church as His Faithful Family

Week 7: Sound Obedience

O Lord our Governor, whose glory fills all the world. We commend this nation to your merciful care, that we may be guided by your providence, and dwell secure in your peace. Grant to the President of this Nation, the Governor of this Commonwealth, and to all in authority wisdom and strength to know and to do your will. Fill them with the love of truth and righteousness, and make them continually mindful of their calling to serve this people in reverent obedience to you; through Jesu Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, world without end. **Amen.**

COLLECT FOR

**ALL IN CIVIL
AUTHORITY**

SOUND OBEDIENCE

Class Outline

- God's Delegation of Authority
- Obedience and Slavery
- Obedience and Government
- Summary of Authority

**GOD'S DELEGATION
OF AUTHORITY**

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OF AUTHORITY

Scriptural Authority

- Hierarchy of Authority
 - God is the ultimate authority over all
 - God delegates authority to “spheres” or social domains of life.
 - Spheres include the Family, the State, Education, Art, Business, etc.
- “Sphere Sovereignty”
 - Abraham Kuyper (1837–1920); cf. *Lectures on Calvinism* (Kuyper); *Contours of Kuyperian Tradition: A Systematic Introduction* (Bartholomew).
 - Further developed by theologians Herman Bavinck and Herman Dooyeweerd.

OBEDIENCE IN THE INSTITUTION OF SLAVERY

- **Unhelpful Ways of Dealing with Slavery**
- **Scripture's Subversion of Slavery**
- **Slavery, Obedience, & Authority**

OBEDIENCE IN THE
INSTITUTION OF SLAVERY

> **Unhelpful Ways of Dealing with
Slavery Passages**

Scripture's Subversion of Slavery

Slavery, Obedience, & Authority

Titus 2.9–10; 1 Timothy 6.1–2

[Teach] slaves to be submissive to their own masters and to give satisfaction in every respect; they are to be well-pleasing, not argumentative, not pilfering, but showing perfect fidelity, so that in everything they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior.

— Titus 2.9–10

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Titus 2.9–10; 1 Timothy 6.1–2

Let all who are under the yoke of slavery regard their own masters as worthy of all honor, so that the name of God and the teaching may not be blasphemed. Those who have believing masters must not be disrespectful to them on the ground that they are members of the church; rather they must serve them all the more, since those who benefit by their service are believers and beloved.

— 1 Timothy 6.1–2

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Two Ways to Mishandle Slavery Passages

- “Slavery was different back then.”
 - Generally in reference to chattel slavery.
 - Roman Law: *Servus non habit personam* – “A slave has no personhood.”
 - Ex: Master/Slave relationship was like Employer/Employee today.
- Scripture and her authors promote Slavery, and therefore are in error.
- Neither does justice to Scripture’s canonical mentions of slavery.

OBEDIENCE IN THE
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Unhelpful Ways of Dealing with Slavery
Passages

> **Scripture's Subversion of Slavery**

Slavery, Obedience, & Authority

Scripture's Subversion of Slavery

Creation: Genesis 1–4

- Genesis 1–2:
 - God creates human beings to be royal priests, placing them in Eden.
 - Their calling: exercise delegated dominion over creation which reflects God's holiness, glory, beauty and benevolence.
- Genesis 3: The Fall separates human beings from God, one another, and creation.
- Genesis 4: Cain murders Abel.

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Scripture's Subversion of Slavery

Covenant: Mosaic Law

- 613 Laws in Two Parts:
 - Ten Commandments – expressions of God's moral and ethical nature.
 - 600+ “Case Laws” – application of Ten Commandments to all areas of life.
- Case Law often mitigates our hardened hearts.
- Example: Matthew 19 and Jesus' teaching on divorce:
 - Not God's intent for marriage.
 - Mitigates and restrains divorce.

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> **Scripture's Subversion of Slavery**

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Scripture's Subversion of Slavery

Covenant: Mosaic Law

- Hebrew slaves were to be freed, no strings attached, every 7 years (Ex 21.2)
- A slave injured by their master was to be set free (Ex 21.26–27)
- Slave trading punished by death (Ex. 21.16)
- Escaped slaves must be given freedom and asylum (Deut. 23.15–16)

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Scripture's Subversion of Slavery

St. Paul's Epistles

- 1 Timothy 1.10 forbids slave trade (cf Ex 21.16)
- Slaves should gain freedom if possible (1 Cor. 7.21; cf Deut. 23.15–16)
- The Epistle to Philemon (cf. 1 Timothy 5.1–2)
- In Christ there is no slave nor free (Gal. 3.28)

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Slavery, Obedience, & Authority

- Titus 2.9–10 and 1 Timothy 6.1–2 are in the canonical context just discussed.
- 1 Corinthians 7.17, 21

Let each person lead the life that the Lord has assigned him, and to which God has called him... Were you a slave when you were called? Don't let it trouble you — although, if you can gain your freedom, do so.

- The key phrase in 1 Timothy 6.1–2: “show perfect fidelity” (NRSV)

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- The key phrase in 1 Timothy 6.1–2: “show perfect fidelity” (NRSV)
- Question: to whom?
- Since all authority is delegated authority, fidelity is to God through the authority for each “sphere.”
- Scripture *is* concerned with justice, yet...
- ...it is often more concerned with our holiness and fidelity within a situation than it is with the situation.

**OBEDIENCE IN THE
INSTITUTION OF GOVERNMENT**

Titus 3.1–2

Remind [the congregation] to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work, to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and to show courtesy to everyone.

OBEDIENCE IN THE
INSTITUTION OF GOVERNMENT

Romans 13.1-2, 5

Let every person be subject to the governing authorities; for there is no authority except from God, and those authorities that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore, whoever resists authority resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment... Therefore, one must be subject, not only because of [Government's authority to bear the sword] but also because of conscience.

OBEDIENCE IN THE
INSTITUTION OF GOVERNMENT

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INSTITUTION OF GOVERNMENT

Context: The Roman Empire

- Context: St. Paul is writing during the reign of Nero. (Remember week 1?)
- “Mockery of every sort was added to their deaths. Covered with the skin of beasts, they were torn by dogs and perished, or were nailed to crosses, or were doomed to the flames and burned to serve as nightly illumination when daylight had expired. Nero offered his gardens for this spectacle.” – Tacitus

Civil Disobedience

- What about civil disobedience?
 - Exodus 1.15–21 (State's unjust murder)
 - 1 Kings 18.3, 2 Kings 11.1-3 (State's unjust murder)
 - Daniel 3.1–18, 6.1–10 (State's coercion of deity worship)
 - Acts 4–5 (State's silencing of the gospel)

OBEDIENCE IN THE
INSTITUTION OF GOVERNMENT

Civil Disobedience

- What about civil disobedience?
 - Disobedience can not be done through sinful means
 - Those engaged in disobedience accepted their punishment (cf. Daniel, Acts)
 - Not due primarily to differences in political philosophy or convictions.

OBEDIENCE IN THE
INSTITUTION OF GOVERNMENT

SUMMARY

TODAY'S SOURCES

- Abraham Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism*.
- Craig Bartholomew, *Contours of the Kuyperian Tradition: A Systematic Introduction*
- David A. Skeel, Jr. & Tremper Longman, III, *The Mosaic Law in Christian Perspective*.
- N.T. Wright, *Scripture & the Authority of God*.
- Tremper Longman III, *How to Read Exodus*.
- Tacitus, *Annals*, 15.44.
- William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*. Vol. 46 in Word Biblical Commentary.