



ISSUE

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December 5, 2021

# Faithful Sayings

BULLETIN OF  
THE OL-  
SEN PARK  
CHURCH OF  
CHRIST

## Services

**Sunday: 9:00 AM**

**9:30 AM**

**10:30 AM**

**Wednesday: 7:00 PM**

## Elders:

**Patrick Ledbetter**

**Brady McAlister**

**Jeff Nunn**

## Deacons:

**Ben Hight**

**Blake McAlister**

**Walker McNear**

**Sam Nunn**

**Lance Purcell**

**Justin Smiley**

**Trevor Yontz**

## Evangelist:

**Kyle Pope**

## Respect for Authority

By Kyle Pope

One of the challenges that Christians face is determining what characteristics of the culture in which they find themselves in can co-exist with Christian character and which must be put away. If my culture teaches that being an American, a Canadian, a Mexican, or a German means that I violate the teachings of Jesus it is more important that I am a Christian, than it is that I am a good citizen. One characteristic of modern American culture that presents us with such a challenge has to do with attitudes towards authority. Some of this is a part of our heritage.

- We honor the challenge our ancestors made to the authority the king of England which was formalized in the Declaration of Independence. We consider this a great moment in our history that shapes our national identity. This has taught us to be cautious in attitudes towards authority.
- In religion, unlike many Roman Catholic countries, the strong Protestant background of many US citizens has led to the rejection of the idea that there is a “pope” who holds religious authority over all churches. This independent spirit has even bled over to professing Catholics. In America, many Catholics may honor the pope but reject some of his teachings.
- Since the 1960’s there has been an increasing push to resist authority. The anti-war counterculture of the 60s taught the generation trained by them that older people are “out of touch,”

so it's OK to speak to them with contempt and disrespect. From this thinking (directly or indirectly) has been born children that may curse their parents and teachers, teenagers that lie and defy instruction, leading to a generation of young adults who think nothing of breaking laws they don't like (so long as they don't get caught)!

As Christians we must consider what the Bible teaches us about respect for authority. Should Christians demonstrate respect for authority? Must this respect only be shown when authorities demonstrate themselves to be worthy of respect? Should the attitudes of Christians differ from that of the culture around us?

### **God Has Established Positions of Authority.**

**1. In the Family.** Paul taught husbands and wives, "Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body" (Eph. 5:22-23, NKJV). Parents and children are commanded, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 'Honor your father and mother,' which is the first commandment with promise" (Eph. 6:1-2).

**2. In the Church.** After talking about elders in the local church, Peter wrote, "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'" (1 Pet. 5:5). In the church, God has set specific roles of leadership. Paul, through inspiration wrote, "I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence" (1 Tim. 2:12).

**3. Civil Government.** Paul wrote, "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" (Rom. 13:1). Peter commanded, "Therefore submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether to the king as supreme, 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" (1 Pet. 2:13-14).

**4. Daily Affairs.** Peter instructed servants, "Servants, be submissive to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and



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gentle, but also to the harsh” (1 Pet. 2:18). This sets forth a general principle about those times when we find ourselves under the authority of those who may be difficult to submit to. This applies to other relationships as well. In our work, we can choose the job we work, but while employed by an employer we must behave respectfully toward him or her. The same is true of the attitude of students towards their teachers. If Christians make their faith known but are irresponsible and rebellious employees or students, we bring shame to the God whom we claim to follow.

### Principles Regulating Authority

**1. We must obey God rather than man.** What should Christians do when authorities seek to compel Christians to violate God’s will? When the apostles faced this in the early church, they boldly declared, “We ought to obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29). That doesn’t sanction disobedience in order to change policies we don’t like. The Bible doesn’t teach children to break rules their parents make if they disagree with them. Students are not urged to talk back or disobey teachers who are too strict or boring (Rom. 13:2). We must do right regardless of the circumstance. Christians can try to affect the beliefs and practices of those in authority. Peter taught wives married to unbelieving husbands the value of such influence (1 Pet. 3:1), but this is not accomplished by defiance and insubordination.

**2. We should value those in authority for the “work’s sake.”** Paul told the Thessalonians, “And we urge you, brethren, to recognize those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love for their work’s sake. Be at peace among yourselves” (1 Thess. 5:12-13). We should submit to them so that their work may be pleasant and not a burden. The Hebrew writer wrote, “Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so

with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you” (Heb. 13:17). When Paul converted Onesimus, a slave who had run away from Philemon, in writing to his master he did not command, “set him free!” Nor did he tell Onesimus, “don’t go back!” Instead, he taught these two Christians in different positions of submission and authority how to make each other’s tasks bearable. That’s what true Christians must do!

**3. Authority does not equal flawlessness.** We don’t obey and respect authority because those over us are better, smarter, wiser, or more important than we are. In Acts, Paul came before the Roman governor Felix (Acts 24:10; 24-25). According to history, Felix was a wicked and ruthless man, but Paul treated him with the respect due his office. In Israelite history, after Saul’s sin David was appointed by God to be the next king of Israel. Saul violently opposed David, but David maintained respect for his position as God’s anointed king (1 Sam. 24:3-7). As God in the flesh Jesus was worthy of all respect and honor, but as a child He



faithfully yielded Himself in submission to the authority and guidance of His parents (Luke 2:51-52). Jesus's parents were not flawless, but Jesus submitted to their authority as His parents.

### Conclusion

A number of years ago a friend who was in the military shared with me some of the frustration enlisted men often felt towards their officers. He was not an officer and handled communications. He told me of instances in which

the officers that had authority over him might not understand as much as their underlings about the equipment or how it was used—but they were still in charge!

As Christians there will be times when...

- We must respect our parents, even if we don't understand the reasons for their instructions.
- We must use a respectful tone with our teachers, even if they are rude to us.
- We must be good employees even if our bosses don't deserve our respect.
- We must be submissive to our husbands even when they disappoint us.
- We must submit to the elders, even when we disagree with judgments they make.
- We must honor our political officials "for the work's sake."

We do all these things, not because all of the people in positions of authority are worthy of our respect, but because when we do so, we are displaying the honor and respect that we feel for God.

As we serve others, we are serving God (Col. 3:22-25).



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