

Romans
“Authority”
Romans 13:1-7

If you're a visitor today, you have come on the week after Easter, and we are resuming after the glorious celebration of the work of Christ and all that it means for us. We're resuming our study in the book of Romans. We're near the end. We're in chapter 13, in a challenging passage about authority.

So far this morning, you know that we've emphasized the sovereignty and the reign of God of all things, and that includes his rule over the authorities. So our theme today is very simple, “The Lord is King and He delegates authority to people on earth.” To some of you who are now leaders and to all of us who are followers, and he commands us to honor and respect our authorities.

Hear God's word, Romans 13: 1 - 9.

Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. ²Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. ³For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, ⁴for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer. ⁵Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience. ⁶For because of this you also pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing. ⁷Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed.

Let's pray for a moment. Lord, we thank you for this part of your word. Challenging though it is, and we ask you to give us ready ears and hearts. Glad to receive and to live by what you say. We pray in Jesus name, Amen. You may be seated.

I want to take you back a few years, maybe 464 years, to a scene in Scotland. The year 1561. There is Mary, Queen of Scots, Queen of the land, 19 years old, couldn't speak Scottish or English, spoke Latin and French, so that John Knox, who was about 57 or 58 years old, having a conversation with them, they probably had to speak in Latin with each other, and they were disputing. Mary, Queen of Scots was not happy that John Knox, who was one of the leaders of the Reformation, the founder in some ways of the Presbyterian Church in England and Scotland. She was not happy with his preaching

because she was a Catholic and he was a Protestant Reformed person. She said, I'm the Queen and the Queen. I know Romans 13 for she said, the Queen has authority and you should institute the religion that I want you to institute. And that's the Catholic religion you need to stop preaching. John Knox said, ***madam, right religion does not take its origin or authority from worldly princes, but from God alone. God is the one who establishes the right church, and we find that right church by studying his word.*** That was a classic discussion or disagreement. I will tell you that she left before too long, and Knox won the day for Scotland. But their debate was this who gets to establish the right religion of the land. The real debate is who has power, worldly princes? Or is the power and the authority ultimately go to God and His Word?

Now, I'm a professor by nature, and so I'm going to go a little nerdy on you for just 3 or 4 minutes, if you can stand it and tell you that there have been four views held over the years between Christian and Christian or secular people with an interest in religion about how the work plays out between religious leaders and political leaders.

The first one is called **Erastianism**, named after a man named Erastus who said that political leaders should control the religion of the people that's been given to religious leaders to establish a unified realm under one religion, and they said, you have four choices. You can either adopt the religion that the prince or king or queen in this case, dictates, or you can pretend to adopt it, fake it, just go quietly and worship even though you don't believe a word this being said. Or you can leave the country, or you can go to jail. Take your pick. That was the main approach in England for centuries in Scotland and France and Germany.

The second view is exactly the opposite, and it's visible today in a place like Iran, and that's called **Theocracy**. And that is God leads civil authorities through his word. Therefore, those who have authority in the country are the religious leaders. And they'll tell you what God's Word means, and everybody should follow the religious or spiritual leaders of a country.

The third view I ran out of fancy words (it is actually called Constianism) but who cares? I'm calling it **Collaboration**. Collaboration basically says, and it's what's visible in Russia today. The religious powers and the political powers will support each other. And if the state church will support the governor, good. And the governor will throw some favors back to the state church, and they'll be a club, you might say, of two.

The last view which prevails in America today and most of us probably adopt, is called **principled pluralism**. And that is political leaders protect all religions, including Christianity, but all religions. And they don't try to decide what the right religion is because, as John Knox said, they're not competent for that. Political leaders are not

theologians. Let them take care of the borders of the country and justice and just laws, and defend from possible adversaries and religious leaders will take care of spiritual and gospel matters.

What we said today is stay in your lane - the fancy way that theologians say it is a sphere sovereignty, their various spheres of life. And everybody has authority and competence in their sphere. Religious leaders in spiritual matters, political leaders in politics, economic leaders in economics, educational leaders in education, everybody does what they're called upon to do by God. The state uses physical power. The family uses the power of love and gentle discipline and so forth.

Okay, those are the issues in front of us today. What does the Bible have to say? The Bible says this -- God establishes all authorities on earth, including political authority. But every authority you can think of, authority, in other words, is an issue. It touches all of life. It touches church and state and business and family and schools and education. And it's hard for us to hear this word that we should respect and honor and submit to authorities. Because America is a nation that began in rebellion. We began in rebellion against England, and we threw off the yoke. We're a group of rebels and revolutionaries. And not only that, but we're a democracy, which means that every year or every two years or every four years, depending on how you look at it, we get to vote one set of political leaders in and another set out. And then what we do it through two parties is adversarial. And so we're constantly criticizing the other party. And you get elected by saying how bad the party in power is. And so we're constantly hearing how bad some of the authorities are, and it rubs off on us. Even on we who are believers, we're prone to become citizens of our age, and we live in a critical age. And so we need to hear what the apostle has to say.

And that is let every person - chapter 13, verse one - be subject to the governing authorities, for there's no authority except from God. And those that exist have been instituted by God. God ordains all human authorities. You may be a person who's an authority. And I tell you, most of you, if you're not in authority right now, will be someday. And you should embrace that. Whether you're a parent or a teacher or a magistrate, or a supervisor or owner of a business, or a researcher who finds out the facts and the first word is, be subject to the authorities. Now, when we hear the word authority, we don't always have a positive attitude toward it. We think authorities are kind of maybe oppressive or trying to get their way or, maybe even have an ulterior, selfish purpose or motive in the use of their authority.

But the Bible uses two words, and they're worth differentiating. The word **power** is what we think of when we think "raw power." That is to say, I get to tell you what to do. But the

word **authority** has in the Bible the idea in it of rightful authority, or someone who's appointed to a place, someone who's responsible from God to lead. In other words, authority is a positive word in the Bible. It means right rule someone who has the right to command. It's more than raw power. Now, of course, this prompts questions people ask in America quickly. What do you mean? Did God appoint all authorities? Genghis Khan, Hitler, Mao, Stalin? People who killed millions of their own citizens, sometimes in a crazed quest for a new order? I have to tell you, I spoke on Romans 13. I was asked specifically to come to a group of people after a hotly contested election a few years ago, and I was invited specifically to speak on the question of respect for or how to receive this new authority, who was elected. And I never got more angry, you're an idiot, emails and text messages in my entire life. I'm going to tell you what some of them said.

One of them said, how can I honor a leader who has a warped view of the world, one with no skills and no experience? Another one said, do you really think God appointed all authorities? Don't you know the names of the evil authorities in the world?

Another one said, I can't respect a leader who does more harm than good, who abuses and shames people. What are you smoking? Answer is someone saying smoking it all is just describing what the Bible has to say. 13:1 one more time.

There is no other word except from God. And that statement actually is grounded in the Old Testament, the call to respond faithfully to Roman authority. The Emperor at that moment was Nero, who took power with murder and left power with insanity. He wasn't bad all the time, but that's who ruled at the moment.

Paul said, respect him. And that's a reflection of what the prophet Jeremiah, among others, said. When the Israelites were judged by God for centuries of infidelity and carried off in large measure the leaders at least to Babylon, God said through Jeremiah in chapter 29, you need to pray for the prosperity and the peace of Babylon, the city in which you live. Respect and pray for them. Seek their welfare. Live according to their laws. That is the lot that you have at this point in life.

Now I need to say, and you're not surprised to hear me say it, that there is such a thing as evil authority. And it's not simply the case that all authorities have been appointed in the same way by God. In Romans chapter one verse 24, God says that when people rebel long enough, he will give them over to their ways.

And if people choose to follow evil authorities. And by the way, enormous numbers of people chose to follow Hitler and chose to follow Mao Tse Tung and all the rest. If you follow an evil authority, you may get what you sought. Another way to put it is from the

words of a U.S. senator who's a PCA elder named Jim Talent said to me one day, the Lord gives democracies the governments they deserve.

So if you don't like your leaders, just remember you are in a nation or in a state that voted for these people. And perhaps it's a call to repent. So that's one caveat about authority. Another one is we don't always have to submit to authority. It's on an absolute rule. We have many teachings in the Bible. One of them says we must obey God rather than men.

And that was spoken at a moment when the church was new and the apostles were preaching. And the religious authorities in Jerusalem said, stop blaming the blood of Christ on us. Stop it. Stop saying that we killed Jesus. Stop making that some kind of a claim of the way to be right with God. And the apostles said, sorry, we can't stop preaching because you tell us to.

We have to tell the truth about what happened with Christ and what it actually means. You may remember that Daniel had three friends and I got a practice to get this right. Their names are Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. It's hard for me to say it because when my kids were little, it was always Shadrach, Meshach, and To Bed We Go. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

They were told to bow down to an image of the emperor, and they refused. He said, well, you're going to die. They said, well, we'll see, but whether we live or die. And in case you don't know, they lived. Whether we live or die, we're not going to bow down to an image of a non god. So we don't always obey the authorities, but it's not simply obey.

But hey, a lot of time you don't have to. The Bible has nuance. There's actually three levels of teaching the first level is positive. God says in Proverbs chapter eight, verses 23 and following by me. Kings rule and rulers decree what is just by me. Princes rule and nobles and all who govern justly. So God says, above all, I'm ruling through those who govern injustice.

But then in another place he rules and appoints. Those who rule might say neutrally, Daniel, in chapter two and four speaks of Nebuchadnezzar, a king who was good in some ways and bad in some ways, that God changes times and seasons. He removes kings and sets up kings, call that the neutral, and then negatively, Jesus told pilot, who was a corrupt ruler, you would have no authority over me at all unless it had been given to you from above, from the father.

So God ordains positive authority to do good. God ordains neutrally all authority and even for his own purposes. Sometimes he appoints evil rulers. Now, again, in democracies, we balk at this because we're used to the idea that we get to choose our

own authorities and we'll respect them if we voted for them. If they're political. And in the economic realm, we have the idea, which is valid, that we can decide where to work, who our boss will be, and maybe we motivate ourselves to switch jobs by thinking derogatory thoughts and constantly criticizing the person who's over us at work to galvanize ourselves to go take another job.

And so we're critical because of cultural factors, not biblical teaching. Again, the word is submit to the authorities. Now submit. And our culture is largely a dirty word. Submit is something you do when you're wrestling or MMA. Not that I approve of MMA, but it does exist when you're wrestling or in various contact sports. Fighting sports you submit. When you've been controlled dominant, you lose. To submit is to lose. And we think to submit to somebody is to be crushed or under their thumb. But in the Bible, the word submit comes from two words. It mean to order things under someone else. That is to say, when an authority speaks to us, ideally they give us principles and we say, oh, thank you for that.

I will arrange my life or our business or our politics under the general principles you've given us. In other words, there's still freedom within the realm of submission to an authority whose over you. It's not a negative thing. It's not mere obedience or pure obedience. And we should yield to authorities and respect them and honor them, because we should know that there is such a thing as expertise.

I once told one of my students. He told me three years later, he was really mad for two years. He said it's my opinion, blah blah blah. He was a freshman at a seminary. He'd been in classes for about five weeks, and I said to him, you know, not all opinions are equal.

You have a new idea today. You've been a seminarian for five weeks. I've been at this for, you know, 28 years. My opinion counts more than yours does. And the leader has an opinion. This form by experience and education and training in the school of hard knocks and technical studies. And they know things that they can't divulge. Why did you do that?

Sometimes he answers, I can't tell you why I did it. It's a confidential matter. So we respect our authority. We should have this in our mind. We should have in our mind when we work for somebody. If someone started this business and that person put blood, sweat and tears into this business and I should listen to what they have to say.

I say this because in America, we have an enormous tendency to criticize our leaders. I confess that I've done the same thing. First job I had after college, I only held for about three months while waiting for the right thing to happen. I was working in a very large

hotel restaurant. My job was to unload trucks and to get food to the various cooks who were feeding 3000 people a day, and for some reason, the boss took me into his confidence a little bit and he started showing me the way he does things.

And he said, now I guess what? We get most of our food from this supplier and this supplier and this supplier, but some from this one over here. And I said, hey, why do we why do we buy anything from this supplier? The price of milk and eggs and meat and vegetables and fruits is everything is more expensive.

It doesn't make any sense. Why are you doing that? Was critical. I was critical on my mind. Eventually I said it to him. He said, I support this supplier because I want him to need my business. He's small, he's hungry, and if we are ever in desperate need to get, you know, meat for a special meal, he will do everything to come through. It's worth it to have him. I thought, that's a stupid. I thought it was stupid until we couldn't get some special food for a very special meal. And then I realized that I was wrong. And he was right. I was 21 years old and judging my boss already, even though he was 55. With 35 years of experience in the field. I was wrong. It's very easy to judge now if you hesitate about this.

The Apostle Peter says we give respect to our leaders, if only for the Lord's sake. That's first Peter chapter 2:13. That is to say, an off, an authority that's dubious or questionable or even evil is still someone that God has put in a place for a reason.

And if only for the office of if only because we believe in God's sovereignty, we should respect and pray for the leaders again. Again we think, really, Hitler? And I remind you that Nero was the emperor in Paul's day. And you may ask, hey, what if it's something like that scene from 1984 by George Orwell, in which was suddenly decreed that two plus two equals five, which is pretty upsetting to a lot of math and science.

What do we do in that case? And the answer is the Bible doesn't tell everything in this passage. The beauty about the Bible is that it scatters his teachings widely. And there is a passage in revelation chapter 13 that answers our question, and we're going to put, chapter 12, verse 17, and then chapter 13, verses one two for him to read it to you and explain how Romans 13 and revelation 13 stand together.

So Romans 13, the message is respect and honor and heed the authorities. And revelation 13 says, yes. But it is also true that sometimes the authorities can be demonic. So revelation chapter 12, verse 17, it says, then the dragon became furious. Now the dragon is explicitly identified as Satan. Earlier in chapter 12. So Satan is furious and he stood on the sand of the sea. The sea here would probably be the Mediterranean Sea. He's standing there and he's going to summon help in his opposition to God. And what

does he do? Well, we see rising out of the sea right in front of the beach. Right in front of the dragon, a beast. I saw a beast rising out of the sea with ten horns. In the Bible, horns represent power with ten horns, and seven heads had his authority in the Bible with ten diadem. So it's a fancy word for crowns, which means somehow this authority and power has been recognized, has been crowned, even though blasphemous names were on its heads on the verse two. And the beast that I saw was like a leopard. Its feet were like a bear's, and its mouth was like a lion's mouth. And to it the dragon that Satan gave his power, and his throne and his authority. So there is authority that comes from the evil on one of its heads seem to have been wounded with a mortal wound, but it's mortal wound was healed, and the whole earth marveled as they followed the beast.

Now, this is representing the fact that sometimes political leaders, national leaders, get people who love and adore them. You know that you know, Mao Tse tung and Stalin and the leaders of North Korea erect statues to themselves all over their countries and call themselves things like the father of the people. The most egregious case is a man named Enver Hodja, who was absolute ruler over Albania for 40 years, and his motto was Albania is all the religion an Albanian needs. People who minister today and we support it in Albania will tell you things like, so far as we can tell, when those who died in 1988 or 89 they forget, there were perhaps as few as five evangelical Christians in the whole country because he was bent on exterminating Christianity. Verse four. And they worshiped the dragon. That is to say, evil rulers ultimately serve the worship of Satan. We had given his authority to the beast, and they worshiped the beast and said, who is like the beast and who can fight against you?

You might remember the phrase from the Bible who is like is used of God, and the beast claims it. So this is a part of the picture. There are forces that are absolutely bent on wickedness. And so I say that Praise God you don't live in such a country. We may not like our leaders, but we do not live under. And so the word to us is respect and honor and submission and obedience as much as possible doesn't mean always. When Pharaoh ordered the Israelite midwives to kill the male babies, the midwives refused. And when Nebuchadnezzar told Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to bow to a golden image, they refused. They were willing to die if necessary.

In acts chapter five, when the high priest said, you apostles, you're filling the city with your teaching. You're blaming us for killing Jesus. You're saying he's the Redeemer? You got to stop. We're going to we're not going to stop. They said, okay, in the jail, you go. God said, very good. I'm going to send an angel to open the gates of the prison.

And when the gates are open, the angel says, go preach. Go to the temple courts. I'm quoting acts 5:20. Go to the temple courts. Tell the people the full message of this new life. The leaders say we gave you strict orders not to do this. They said, yeah, we have to obey God, not you. On this occasion. So this is this is complicated when, when someone gives a command that we cannot follow and John Calvin thought long and hard about this question.

John Calvin lived in and was most active in leadership around 1550 and so forth. And that period of time, the Reformation was sweeping through France. There were churches with thousands of Protestants gathering for worship, and the king cracked down and exiled people and jail people and killed people, including some of the people who graduated from Calvin's own seminary.

And so we agonized about the question, what do I owe to a leader of my country, given that we're supposed to honor and respect, but I also have to protect my people? This very evil. And he said, look, we obey the leaders as much as we possibly can. And if they're guilty of murdering their own people, we don't simply rebel or start a revolution.

We appeal to other authorities. He called those are the authorities, the lesser magistrate. That is to say, if the king is evil, we'll go to somebody under the king, a duke or someone like that. If in your workplace, in other words, your leader is evil, you can go to another authority. You may go down to a lesser manager at appeal.

Can you please stop what's happening in our workplace? Or you can go above to the board or jump. It's risky, but you can go above and hit another authority. Do you know what's happening here? Let me tell you, you're not. You're not disrespecting authority. You're going to another authority. That's what Calvin said. And it's, I believe, very good counsel, a good way to look at Romans chapter 13, the command to obey and submit, and also to recognize that some leaders are corrupt.

But mostly chapter 13, verses three and four say rulers are good. They're a terror. Verse three says to to bad conduct, not to good conduct. He says, Paul says, do you want to have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good and you'll receive his approval. We all experience this every time we're driving along, and we see a police car.

If you're going 45 miles an hour in a 30 mile an hour zone, you're afraid the policeman is a terror to you because you could be pulled over and given a ticket. And if you're going 42 miles an hour in a 45 mile an hour zone, you say, bless you, a police officer. We're so glad that you're helping people drive.

Well and you're not worried at all. That's the way it should be, because governors are servants. They're serving for good. It also says they don't bear the sword in vain. They're

an avenger. Carries out, carries out wrath on a wrongdoer. Now, what it's saying is, and if you're a leader, you need to hear this. It's your responsibility not only to give good rules, but also to bring order to those who are misbehaving.

Let me say it a slightly different way. What orchestra does this very best? The orchestra with great musicians or the orchestra with great musicians and a great conductor. What sports team does best? The team that has terrific athletes, or the team that has terrific athletes and a great coach? What business works the best? The one that has great workers or the one has great workers and good leaders?

I mean, the answer is easy. The answer is obvious. Leaders bring out the best, but they also reign in what is worse. That's the point about the sort how miserable it is to be working in a place where a variety of people don't do their job and are never held to account how good it is when somebody says, you want to keep your job here, you got to work better, you're dumping your work on other people.

What's a school like where teachers impose no order on miscreant students? What about a church where anything goes? We need those who are in authority to exercise their authority. Leaders approve what is good. However, they don't just punish what's evil. You see it there, don't you? The government approves. The leaders approve what is good in Paul's day. Believe it or not, roads in places from city to city, or even in towns were often built not by the state but by wealthy people in town.

They would spend their wealth and they would get a favor. They would get along side the road. An inscription on a stone saying, this road was built by this justice, or by Crispus or somebody else, and that was their reward. And today in America, although we don't pay as much attention to as we could, the government gives honors and awards and medals to people who do outstanding work or sacrifice or serve in remarkable ways.

We wish, don't we, that the media would spend more time blessing and labeling what is good. And so I tell you who are in authority, spend time recognizing, labeling, carefully describing what is good and blessed, and it inspires and encourages everybody around when they see that blessed behavior, kind acts of service and diligence are rewarded. Two months ago.

Ten weeks ago, Debbie and I were home and, when rolling in Saint Louis, you know, every 6 or 7 weeks, the yard gets pretty ratty. Can you imagine that? And so we're toiling in our yard, and we thought we need reinforcements. And so we got our granddaughter, Estelle, who was 11 years old. And I said to her, because she has the ability, Estelle, real work, real pay. We're going to do some hard work in the yard. And if you do hard work in

the yard, I will pay you well. And she worked hard for an hour and a half dirty, thankless, sweaty jobs getting,

And by the way, because you did so well without stopping or complaining for one minute, go pick whatever dress you want under the leadership of your mom, because you did a terrific job and I label it for you. Thank you for working like a grown up today.

It's a blessed thing when somebody takes the time to notice, to label and to reward good behavior. And that's something that leaders should do. According to this passage, we're not only servants of God to avenge, we also leaders also bless those who do good.

And say so. Well, leaders, how blessed it is to be able to stand up as Saul, as Samuel did many years ago, and say to the people of Israel, I defrauded you of nothing, assured you all my days how blessed that is, how blessed it is to serve the people under us, keeping them honest and to submit yourself to those people for their good.

One of my favorite passages, oddly enough, is from Proverbs chapter 31, verses four and following, and it says that leaders, although prone by human nature to reward themselves, are to use their power and their wealth for their own benefit, should do exactly the opposite. It says this it is not for kings. Lemuel is not for kings to drink wine, or for rulers to take strong drink, lest they drink and forget what has been decreed, and pervert the rights of all the afflicted.

Leaders are prone to say, I've got wealth, I'm going to drink, I'm going to eat. I'm going to be merry and enjoy the fruits of my prosperity and my leadership. And Proverbs says, God says to Proverbs exactly the opposite. The leader should be the last to indulge himself or herself, and the first to bless those who are weak.

And that is why we should gladly take up the mantle of honoring and respecting and doing very concrete things, which is what Paul says in chapter 13, verse five, paying taxes. He says, therefore one must be in subjection not only to avoid God's wrath, but also for the sake of conscience. Verse six pay your taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing.

He says, pay what you owe. And the words he uses for taxes in this passage are actually two different taxes. One tax is the tax you pay. It's like a sales tax in our country. We say, okay, I bought things, I pay taxes, road taxes, taxes of that nature. The other tax is the tax for living inside the Roman Empire.

And it's a tax that you pay to the Romans so they can more effectively oppress you is the most onerous task tax imaginable. Paul says pay that one to pay to all what is due to them. Fear God, honor the Emperor. Peter says in a different place we say, I say to you,

that means the Emperor. Also your teachers, also your bosses, also your political leaders.

If you have doubts about this, if you have doubts about the value of leaders, I invite you to research or go see Yemen or Rwanda. Or Syria. Right now lands where anarchy holds force is so much better. Even have a flawed leader than no leader. Let me say it a different way. Suppose you have lived your life in your early days under parents who were flawed.

That would apply to all of us. Suppose your mother was naive and you think it's so easy to disregard your mother. She's so naive. She doesn't know the way the world works. You know what? It's not all bad to be naive. She's not acquainted with the ways of evil. She's trusting. That's not a bad thing. You can either disregard your mother or you can respect your mother.

And let's say your dad knows how to read people. Maybe is a little bit manipulative. You can be angry and disrespect your father for being a little bit manipulative. Or you can say, you know, my father really knew how to read people, and there's something good about that. It's a matter of choice how you respond to your leaders.

God appointed your leaders. Apostle Paul said. We need this word because America is full of authority. Skeptics, people who look at a leader and say, what does he really want? He says this, but what really is his motive? Why is he actually doing it? And we're skeptical of almost everybody because we think it's cool or insightful to be an authority skeptic.

So what does the Lord ask of us, Lord? Ask first of all, that we would notice who our leaders are. Identify them. I invite you to do that today. Identify all the leaders that are in your life. There may be more than you realize. Identify your leaders. Say to yourself, maybe even pray. These are the authorities God has put into my life.

And then, as far as you possibly can resolve to honor and respect and even obey your leaders. Understand, of course, that if they command wickedness, you have to obey God rather than men. A third thing you can do is nurture inner humility and say to yourself, they may know some things I don't know. And my propensity to make a snap judgment that that that leader, that authority is wrong could be hubris, pride.

Maybe they know more. Maybe their experience of training has them doing things that I can't even understand. And fourth, if you find yourself falling short, repent. We just finished the Easter season. The good news is that Jesus gave his life, died, and rose to make a propitiation sacrifice to atone for our sins, to justify us, to set us right with God.

And therefore, if you have fallen short, repent, the Lord will be gracious to forgive you. We do this all knowing that we stand under the supreme authority of the Lord himself, who is sovereign over all things. He reigns over all. That's what we sang and confessed all through the first half of this service. God as our sovereign Lord, he ordains all things.

And so let us trust him under Christ and under the authority he ordains all to his glory, all to his honor, confessing his love and his forgiveness, but also his reign in our lives.

Let's pray. Heavenly father, we thank you. I thank you for this word that challenges probably just about all of us here today. We are in love with our own opinions and our own ideas. So, Lord, I pray that you would give us hearts that are willing to receive encouragement but also correction. I pray for those who are leaders that they would use the powers they have to rein in evil, but also to bless the label to honor what is good. We pray, Lord, that you would give us all insight into your ways and insight into your grace when we fall short, we pray it in Jesus name. Amen.