

# “Thank the Blue” Services

Today’s Title: “Thankful for Authority”

November 20, 2016 ~ Selected passages

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**Objective:** To help believers express thanks and gratitude for local Law Enforcement, and to understand God’s design and charge for human governmental / civic authority.

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Video - “The Thin Blue Line” - 1:10

## Opening Prayer

We are truly blessed to live in a nation where the expectation of the society is for the laws to be respected and enforced.

In America, we take for granted these two realities of our culture - it’s simply part of the fabric of our great nation.

But this is not the reality and experience of many throughout the world - or throughout history.

Instead of law and order, chaos, the abuse of power and evil rulers and dictators is the norm for most of human history.

## The reality of evil

A growing percentage of our modern society has rejected the reality/existence of evil.

Evil is thought to be a relic of ancient thinking. Modern intellectuals deny evil in human nature,

*“Christian Science teaches that evils such as suffering and disease only appear to be real, but in truth are illusions, and in reality evil does not exist.”* (Millard J. Erickson,

Christian Theology, Second Edition, Baker Academic, 2007, pp. 445-446.)

The movement's founder, Mary Baker Eddy, wrote, *"Sin, disease, whatever seems real to material sense, is unreal."*

But, the testimony of Scripture is clear and overwhelming.

**Deuteronomy 17:17b**

"So you shall purge the evil from your midst."

**Proverbs 17:13**

"If anyone returns evil for good, evil will not depart from his house."

**Romans 12:21**

"Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."

**Ephesians 6:12**

"For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places."

Yet, many in our modern culture don't know what the Bible teaches, so they're unable to see life - both the good and the evil - from a Biblical worldview.

As a result, some who believe God is real - and God is truly good, kind, and all-powerful (omnipotent) - come to the conclusion that evil cannot possibly exist.

Other will say since evil does exist, God cannot be truly good - or He can't be all-powerful.

What critics and skeptics of Christianity fail to realize and think through, is God, who is perfect in His goodness, kindness, grace, love and power - has

provided the means for evil to be dealt with in human society.

He has not left evil unchecked or running free, but has instead designed society to have the authority and power to push back against evil forces and to protect the society at large from those forces / from people who want to do harm to others.

This is what the police do on a daily basis.

**Police stand in the gap between evil and society.**

Don't fall into the modern-mindset which dismisses talk of evil as some cartoon character or sensationalistic language used to dramatize a point.

All we have to do is look around the world - and see the atrocities which occur as regularly as the sun rises and sets.

All we have to do is look at our own nation and see the evil our nation's police must confront each day.

The threat of evil is real - and I offer as evidence the headlines of police being attacked and ambushed in the last few months.

**Dallas, TX**

*July 7, 2016, 5 Dallas Police Officers were killed in a sniper ambush in downtown Dallas. 7 other officers and 2 civilians were wounded in the attack.*

**Baton Rouge, LA**

*July 18, 2016 - 3 Officers were ambushed and killed*

**Palm Springs, CA**

*Oct. 8, 2016 - 2 officers were killed as they responded to a domestic disturbance.*

**Boston, MA**

*Oct. 13, 2016 - 2 officers attacked and critically wounded by a gunman who had an assault rifle and bullet-proof vest.*

**New York City, NY**

*Nov. 4, 2016 - Sergeant Paul Tuozzolo, a 19-year veteran of the NYPD - was killed. Another officer was wounded, but expected to recover.*

**Show Low, AZ**

*Nov. 8, 2016 - Officer Darrin Reed, 50, who was planning to retire in February, was killed in a confrontation with a suspect.*

**Pittsburgh, PA**

*Nov. 10, 2016 - 2 officers were shot approaching a house in response to a domestic dispute call. Officer Scott Leslie Bashioum, 52, died, the other officer underwent surgery and is expected to recover.*

**Anchorage, AK**

*Nov. 15, 2016 - Police officer was shot, is expected to survive - it was a surprise attack - turns out the*

*shooter was a serial killer - 5 other murders since July 3<sup>rd</sup> have been traced to his gun.*

Evil is a reality - and it's a reality our police encounter, confront and remove from the streets every day.

Police and the governing authorities are the God-given means which allow humanity to stand against the forces of evil.

**God has ordained governing authorities.**

Paul wrote in Romans 13:1-7

“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. 2 Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. 3 For 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, 4 for 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. 5 Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience. 6 For because of this you also pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing. 7 Pay 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.”

This refers both to the political and the law enforcement side of government.

Remember the historical realities in which Paul wrote these words. Nero was Emperor over the Roman Empire - and Nero was no friend to Christians - he abused his power - the military was the police force - and they were certainly oppressive to the people when they were called in. Despite these abuses, Paul writes we must “be subject to the governing authorities.”

In the text he gives reasons why we must be subject:

1. Recognize civic authority is instituted / established by God  
*vs. 1*
2. Resistance will bring judgment *vs. 2*
3. Rulers punish the wrongdoer *vs. 3-4*
4. Respect those in authority *vs. 7 (not earned / position is due respect)*

It's important we think about law enforcement through a biblical lens - not through our own lens or the lens of society.

Does this mean we should be silent if authority and it's accompanying power is used inappropriately?

Not at all.

As followers of Christ, we must speak the truth in love. We must not play favorites (*recognize your bias*) - and we must remind ourselves and others that freedom is found in truth.

At the same time, we must make sure we are wise in what we say - making sure we don't judge without all

the facts. We must understand part of the civic authority Paul is writing about would be the judicial system and the authority it carries in our society.

Peter echoes Paul's words:

**1 Peter 2:13-17**

“Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, **14** or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good. **15** For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people. **16** Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God. **17** Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor.”

The emperor: Nero.

The bottom line is this: we need to understand God has ordained the governing authorities. Yes, the governing authorities are not perfect - but they have been put there by God - which means we must be subject to them - recognizing their legitimate and God-given role, and respecting their position and role in our society.

**Police help maintain peace in society**

There are different types of peace on this earth.

The highest form of peace is a spiritual peace with God, and below that is peace which is a lack of conflict - a temporal peace - a protection from harm - relational.

***The Bible begins*** with a picture of amazing, complete peace - both spiritual and relational as God's creates the universe - our world - and humanity is created and placed in the peaceful Garden of Eden.

***The Bible ends*** with a promise and claim of eternal peace - both spiritual and relational - in the new heaven and new earth.

***Between those two events***, sin has caused all of humanity to live in conflict - to live in a constant state of disruption and uncertainty, as dangers are ever-present. For all human history, peace has been an aspiration.

God promised Israel peace if they remained faithful to His commands (Deut. 28-30), and in the N.T. He promises believers a peace which is beyond all understanding (Philippians 4:7). This promised peace is not only a spiritual peace rooted in our faith in Christ and His forgiveness of our sins - but it's also rooted in a confidence that no matter what happens in our world and in our own life, God is at work, for His good and His glory.

Jesus is called the "Prince of Peace" because He fulfills the promises of God. In Jesus, we have spiritual peace now...but He also will usher in the eternity of peace with the new heaven and new earth.

Unfortunately, peace is not a common experience for humanity because of the reality of Satan - and the reality



of sin and evil. Satan brings spiritual conflict into our world, and disobedient, sinful, evil human beings bring physical conflict and suffering to our existence.

As time goes on, the world is becoming more and more adept at war. Our world is not becoming more peaceful; it's becoming more addicted to war and various forms of conflict.

One famous quote says, *“Peace is that glorious moment in history when everyone stops to reload.”* (The MacArthur New

Testament Commentary, Matthew 1-7, John MacArthur, p. 209-210)

Peace and righteousness go hand-in-hand. If you don't have righteousness, peace will be temporary, because sin is the enemy of peace - it's the counter to peace. Peace without righteousness will simply be a fragile truce, which will be broken at the slightest provocation.

**Isaiah 48:22**

“There is no peace,” says the LORD, “for the wicked.”

**James 3:16**

“For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice.” (No peace!!)

Because...peace and sin / peace and wickedness cannot co-exist.

The only way to have true and lasting peace is through faith in Christ. Only faith in Christ gets rid of sin - and makes righteousness possible.

**Ephesians 2:13-14a**

“But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. 14 For He Himself is our peace...”

**Colossians 1:19-20**

“For in Him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, 20 and through Him to reconcile to Himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of His cross.”

**Galatians 5:22**

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace...”

I want you to see ‘peace’ clearly - through Biblical eyes. Peace is not only an absence of conflict, it’s spiritual life and unity with God through Jesus Christ.

But I do believe there is a wonderful blessing for those who promote and enforce physical peace in our society.

Jesus taught in His sermon on the mount:

**Matthew 5:9**

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.”

In the primary sense, Jesus is speaking of spiritual peace - the eternal peace of God through faith.

But I also believe there is a blessing for those who protect the innocent and stand between evil and the rest of society - for those who make peace.

This blessing is not the blessing of eternal life or the forgiveness of sins, but it’s a blessing of common grace because protecting the innocent is near to God’s heart.

I want to be accurate in pointing to **Matthew 5:9** today - so I don’t want to send a message that Jesus is talking about

police in this verse or those who stand up to the playground bully at school or in the bully in the office. But I do think God smiles upon those who risk their own life and safety for the sake of others.

**John 15:13**

“Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.”

Don't be fooled - just because the peace maintained by police in our society is a temporary peace - don't think it's insignificant.

- Police - those who enforce laws - make it easier for us to live out the Gospel.
- Police make is easier for us to share the Gospel.
- Police make is easier for the church to gather for worship.
- Police make is easier for us to minister.
- Police make is easier for us to love and serve the community.

These are not insignificant blessings we receive because of the dedication and sacrifice of Law Enforcement.

But the question still stands...does God bless Law Enforcement for their role in maintaining peace in society and for their willingness to stand in the gap between evil and the rest of society?

I believe He does - although it's difficult to be specific in detailing the blessings.

I referred to common grace a few moments ago.

*Common grace is the blessing of God given to all people, both believers and unbelievers. (Rain / birth of a child / good health)*

Beyond this, I believe God blesses those who fight against evil - who put their life at peril to protect others. These are not blessings of salvation or forgiveness, but blessing God has designed to be part of nature and society. In nature, one reaps what they sow. In society, those who do good are honored and their relationships become the source of much blessing.

Those who do evil do not enjoy these blessings.

**Proverbs 18:3, 5**

3 “When wickedness comes, contempt comes also, and with dishonor comes disgrace...5 It is not good to be partial to the wicked or to deprive the righteous of justice.”

Those who are wicked, lazy or foolish will often face difficulty in this life, while those who uphold righteousness and serve their fellow citizens will enjoy the blessings God has designed in nature.

As **Romans 13** points out, those who do good will “receive approval” from the authorities.

In general, society encourages and blesses those who contribute to the larger good of society.

This is where the blessing of God is found and enjoyed by those who are in Law Enforcement.

The greatest and most significant blessing of God comes only through faith in Christ - faith in His death on the

cross for your sins - and faith in His resurrection as He defeated death and sin.

My prayer is not just for those in Law Enforcement - but for all people to put their faith in Christ and enjoy His most abundant blessings for all eternity!

### **Apply it...**

We've looked at some Biblical truth / principles concerning the governing authorities and the blessing and protection of police as they enforce laws and stand in the gap between evil and the rest of society.

So... what are we supposed to do with this truth?

How should this truth change our life - our thoughts?

### **Pray and give thanks for those in Law Enforcement.**

#### **1 Timothy 2:1-2**

“First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, 2 for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way.”

In this week of Thanksgiving - give thanks not only for the provisions of God in your own family, but give thanks to God for the provision of police who have a divine commission (Rom. 13) to uphold righteousness and truth, as they repress and remove evil from society.

Notice how Paul connects praying and giving thanks for all people - especially those in “high positions” - with living “a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way.”

Our Christian living is connected to our gratitude for those in authority over us.

We pray not only for their salvation - but for their wisdom, their safety, their well-being, for their family and the unique stress police families endure. Pray for them to administer justice fairly as they serve and protect our community.

Pray and give thanks for those in law enforcement.

**Teach your children a Biblical understanding of governing authorities and Law Enforcement.**

Read these passages to them and explain them - talk about them. When you’re watching the news, ask if the people are obeying God’s Word in their response to the civic authorities.

Be a role model for them to learn from - how you react to being pulled over by a police officer.

How do you talk to the TV when the news is on?

Do your words and your attitude give them a Biblical example to follow?

**Respect and obey Law Enforcement** - *Rom. 13*

Respect the police and what they do. Don’t resist their efforts, but live in a way which makes their job

easier. They routinely confront evil and danger - don't make their job more difficult or challenging than it already is. Don't resist what God has appointed.

Close in prayer