

Harris Creek Baptist Church

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Series: Forged

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Submitting to Authority

1Peter 2:13-25

**<sup>13</sup> Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human authority: whether to the emperor, as the supreme authority, <sup>14</sup> or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right. <sup>15</sup> For it is God's will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish people. <sup>16</sup> Live as free people, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as God's slaves. <sup>17</sup> Show proper respect to everyone, love the family of believers, fear God, honor the emperor.**

**<sup>18</sup> Slaves, in reverent fear of God submit yourselves to your masters, not only to those who are good and considerate, but also to those who are harsh. <sup>19</sup> For it is commendable if someone bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because they are conscious of God. <sup>20</sup> But how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it? But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God. <sup>21</sup> To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.**

**22 “He committed no sin,  
and no deceit was found in his mouth.”<sup>[e]</sup>**

**23 When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. 24 “He himself bore our sins” in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; “by his wounds you have been healed.” 25 For “you were like sheep going astray,”<sup>[f]</sup> but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.**

Harris Creek how are we doing? (Audience cheers) Let's go. I had a friend text me this morning said it's a new day. There is going to be a lot of people that need to hear the gospel. Most of them are going to be Longhorns. I'm here. I see you and I'm here to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ. Come on.

Growing up I was that kid, and you know this kid, that asked why a lot. But why? But why? You know, and my parents I'd wear them out. They'd be like, “Hey, you can't wear that.” But why? “Don't eat that before dinner.” But why? “You can't wear those shoes to church.” But why? “Don't play with that.” But why, daddy, why? I don't understand. But why? Which led me to a very common response that I heard countless times; anybody know what it was? (Audience responds “Because I said so”) Oh, you all know. Oh, okay. Yeah... Because I said so. I hated that response so much that as an eight-year-old, I vowed that I would never tell my children that. And it was so dramatic for me that as a 20 something, 30 something I remembered that vow. So, God in his tremendous sense of humor and heart for irony, gave me a son who asks why a lot. But why, daddy why? “Hey buddy, put the game down. But why? “Hey, no we are not going to do

that right now. But why? But why? I don't understand but why? And sometimes you'll say that, you'll give instructions, and you're multitasking and doing other things. And the why is a little bit like you know (grunts). I always want to say the real answer anytime I can. But sometimes it's like, (struggles against saying because I said so). Don't say it, don't say it. And one time this squeaked out of my mouth, and I was like "oh, yeah," I said, "because you can trust me." Because you can trust me. Yeah, that's different. I'll just run with that. Because you can trust me. Listen, there are things in the Scriptures that you read them and it feels like God is saying "because I said so." Because the Bible says so. It feels like, "just eat your vegetables." And there is a rebellious spirit in me that at times doesn't like that. And maybe some of you are here; that when we receive that hard instruction, you're like, oh, man.

Today's going to be some of that hard instruction. Yeah. We're in 1 Peter 2, and we're talking about submission to authority. And it's very much going to feel like God is saying, "Because I said so." We're in Forged, we're moving through the book of 1 Peter. This is Peter's first letter to the church that is scattered throughout Asia Minor, modern day Turkey, made up of Jewish converts and pagan converts alike coming together to follow the way, Jesus Christ. Under severe persecution by the government. Peter writes this letter to strengthen them, to encourage them, to bring them together, to give them a common vision, to remind them we're not home yet, stay in the fight. God is good. You can trust Him because you can trust Him. An answer like, "because I said so," it implies you need to do what I say because I'm in authority. But an answer like "because you can trust me" says, "You know what? I'm actually a good authority. And I'm taking your best interest into mind, when I say this." And when God says submit to a government, a governing authority rather, authority on earth, authority under the sun, even when it's corrupt, we

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can trust, "Oh, he's doing something bigger than what we see." Because I think that as we get to these chapters of the Bible, and it's not just this one it's really a repeated theme, we're like, "but why would God say that, but why?" And he's saying because you can trust me. And as a parallel to that theme in the Scriptures, if you understand your Bible, if you're reading it, you're going to see oh, yeah, God often uses a corrupt authority to bring about his will. That's completely on par with the way that he has always operated as long as people have walked on the earth. And I think for many of us, when you hear submit to earthly authority, your heart runs to the exception; "well, not if they ask us to sin! Not if they ask us to compromise our conscience! No, no, no, no, not if they're asking for something that's not fair! Oh, they want me to come in more than 40 hours?! Uh-huh, no, not on the weekend! Wear masks!" But I want you to know, not all of those are created equal. Not all those fill in the blanks are the same. And as we read texts like we're going to read today; it's good and right to search for the why. What is God doing? What is he really saying here? What does he want us to do? And there are messages that I will give to you from the stage through this microphone that I feel a moral authority to give. I can come up here and I walk up here with a confidence of like, "oh yeah, I can be the example on this." And then there are messages that I prepare that the Holy Spirit just really convicts my own heart, challenges my own thinking, says "hey, this this may be a place where you're not where you need to be" and this message fits in that second category. And so before you leave convicted, just know that I was convicted in preparation; I often am, but on this one especially.

And so, we're going to be in 1 Peter chapter two verses 13 through 25. We're going to answer questions like: what authority do we submit to? What if that authority is bad? And who is our ultimate authority? Verse 13, **13 Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human**

**authority: whether to the emperor, as the supreme authority, (so that would be taxes and federal law, federal government) <sup>14</sup> or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right. (this would be things like speed limits and water restrictions) <sup>15</sup> For it is God's will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish people. <sup>16</sup> Live as free people, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as God's slaves. <sup>17</sup> Show proper respect to everyone, love the family of believers, fear God, honor the emperor.** It says we should not use our freedom as a cover up. That is to say, to justify sin. We will say, "Oh, well, Jesus will forgive me," or "you know, it's not a sin to drink. Right?" If you're having the conversation with someone, it's probably a good opportunity to slow down and say alright, where am I at in the will of God? What does the Scripture say about this topic?

And I think, you know, as I say, speed limits and water restrictions, there's the mild laughter in the crowd that I'm sure I'd participate in if I was out there. I think just before I go further, I think I just have to say, do you agree? Like is that what this Bible verse, that the Holy Spirit preserved for 1000s of years in the Scripture, as it breaks down; first, there's this government, and then there's this government that carries out these laws, I mean, do we agree that that's what it's saying? And I don't want you to get stuck before I go into point one. That you're just going to argue with me in your head the rest of the time. I think we want to bring some resolve and conclusion to that. That it says, my first point, submits to every human authority, is what the Scripture says.

1. *Submit to Every Human Authority.*

For the Lord's sake, to every human authority. Because God is doing something bigger than what you see in plain sight; submit to every human authority. I know there's people here that think, "unless they're Biden." And then there's another camp and I can almost cover everyone. You know, that's the cool thing about where we're at right now and it is the terrible thing about where we're at, "unless they're Trump." And I want you to know, that Emperor Nero takes away every excuse you have. The man, that is the emperor, that Peter is saying to honor; he doesn't say respect, he doesn't say to trust that person, he says to honor them. And we need to think about what does that word encompass. Because the man that Peter is saying to show honor to, I can't even speak to all the things that he did; right now from the stage publicly, if I did, I would get a bunch of angry emails from sixth grade parents. Because they're here this morning, right? I'll tell you some of the things. As I go into this, I hopefully don't cross that line. He murdered his wife. Could you imagine someone in office murdering their wife? Married an underage boy and dressed him up like his wife and carried on in marriage with him. He burned down Rome or set Rome on fire presumably to rebuild it to what he wanted it to be. People died, but that's no big deal for him because he took delight in torturing people, especially Christians. If anybody came against him, but he saw Christians as the enemy. So, it has been documented, reported that he would take Christians dip them in wax, stick them on a stake, and use them as lanterns for his garden. One account I read said he would stitch animal skin to people and release wild dogs after them to see how fast they could run. Some of these things he would do with an audience for entertainment. Can we just agree, that's way worse than someone you might think is too old or senile or perverted or narcissistic? And you say, why would you say that? Because that's what you say. That's what you say.

And this is the context that Peter is writing this letter to, so it is crazier than it seems. Seems crazy. And it's even wilder than it reads in plain sight. And so, we've got to say, but why God? But why? Why would you say that? The 'what' is submit yourself for the Lord's sake to every human authority. Verse 13. The why, for it is God's will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish people. The context of this passage is the verse 12 from last week, so that they will know Jesus. If you are on earth and you are a Christian, then you see the whole world and every action and every word you speak through the lens of how do I get as many people as I possibly can to know Christ as my savior? That is your modus operandi. That influences how you treat the drive-thru worker, the person in the carpool lane, the construction worker, the ticket taker, the neighbor with the barking dog, or the frustrating whatever, or the government. Everything you do, is done through the lens of 'how do I be the best representative of Jesus Christ my Lord and Savior that I can possibly be, to get as many people as I possibly can to know him?' That's why you're doing what you do. And so that's the why. What is our why in 2023? How do we silence the talk of foolish people? I think often by becoming a fool ourselves.

Imagine you're talking to somebody, okay. So, this is this a simple kind of exercise. You just think of your stance, the one that I've already offended you on, because you have that really strong stance, whatever that is. Okay, wherever you land on these issues, and you have a conversation with someone that is the far other extreme of you. They voted for the other candidate that you didn't vote for. And they think you're crazy for voting for who you voted for

and they're stepping into the ring. They're ready to fight. And there you are. And they go up and you go up and you match that. They get loud, you get loud. Let's go! And then you say this thing. You say the thing. You go oh yeah well. You say something, and they're like uhhhhhhh. And they don't have anything to say in return and you won. You got them. You got them. You argued your point to the moment where they don't have anything to say back. What happened?

Your heart's racing, their hearts racing. Your blood pressure's up, their blood pressure is up. You get in your car to drive off and you have got a little bit of pride. "Man, I have got to remember that. I have got to remember that line, man that got them. I'm going to use that on Facebook. That's a good line. I'm going to make a meme out of that. Man, so good. I got them."

They get in their car. Here's what I promise you has never happened in the history of the world. "Man, they were so right. I'm so wrong. I'm completely changing my views. I'm changing who I vote for. I'm changing the way I see the world. I'm going to go on Facebook right now and make a meme out of that thing they said. That was amazing. Wow." It's never happened. No, what happens is they get in their car, and they hate you. You didn't win, you lost. They hate you. And they hate your kind. And they hate everything you stand for. And you made them feel stupid. And that's what you wanted to do. You wanted to make them feel stupid. So, you think mission accomplished. The kingdom wasn't built. They're not like "man their Jesus is so interesting to me. I really think I should visit their church." It's not happening.

So, what could you do? What could you do? You could sit there, you could ask really good questions like, "man, how did you get to that stance. That's really interesting. You know, it's not where I'm at. But I respect you as a human being made in the image of God that that's your



opinion.” And if you ever want to talk more like, “hey, here's where I'm at. I'm not really looking to like enter into an argument with you or debate go back and forth. Honestly, sometimes when I do that, my heart rate gets up. I get frustrated. I'm driving down the road having conversations with people in my head, and I don't think it honors My God. But, man, if I can, if there was some way for me to have this conversation with you and honor you? My goal is really to honor you.” You make it your number one objective; “hey, I want this person to know Jesus.” That changes everything. And here's what's probably not going to happen; they're probably not going to get in their car and be like, “Oh my gosh, that person was so kind to me, I'm going to vote the way they did.” You know, it's probably not going to happen. Probably didn't change anything in like, big waves right then. But you set yourself up much more likely for them to get to a place where it's like, “I don't know, here's the deal, I thought I hated those kinds of people. But that one was so nice. Maybe I was wrong about them.” And it seems the door is left open at least wider than in that other way. Because that other way it just doesn't work. It never works. It's never worked ever. I mean, I can almost promise you not one person is going to come up to me afterwards and say you know what, that's actually how I got here. No.

So, the how is in verse 16. **<sup>16</sup>Live as free people, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as God's slaves. <sup>17</sup>Show proper respect to everyone, love the family of believers, fear God, honor the emperor.** And so, the dichotomy is that slaves to God are the most free people. Now this is mind blowing stuff. So, I'm camping in the first point longer than usual today, because this is so thick with theology. The paradox of the Christian faith is that freedom comes from submission. That victory comes by way of surrender, not in any other faith does it really work that way, but the Christian faith. When we say “hey, I want to be a slave to

God,” we're the most free man, most free human, most free person. And because if you don't, like let's just say I want the freedom to do whatever I want to do, you become a slave. That's the way the world works. The spirit of the air, the prince of the world, they dangle traps, you step into those traps, you're stuck. I'll give you some examples: “I want the freedom to vape!” Cool, try to stop. “I want the freedom to look at porn! I can look at whatever I want it's all God's creation!” You're a slave. “I want the freedom to buy whatever I want to buy!” Try to stop buying. See if you can. You've become a slave. “I want the freedom to work as hard as I want to work and make as much money as I want to make!” You won the freedom to not know your kids and so that they would grow up and they would have all of these things that nobody enjoys because you're not there. You're a slave. This is what he's saying.

There's one way to live and that is as a servant of the Most High God. There's this story in the Scripture, it's repeated almost exactly in Mark 12, and I think it's Matthew 22, where they they're trying to trap Jesus. And they say, “Hey, do we need to pay the Imperial tax to the emperor?” They're like, “hey, yes or no,” like he's stuck. Checkmate. And he even says, “Hey, I know you're trying to trap me,” but this is how he responds, **“Bring me a denarius and let me look at it.”**<sup>16</sup> **They brought the coin, and he asked them, “Whose image is this? And whose inscription?”** “Caesar's,” they replied.<sup>17</sup> **Then Jesus said to them, “Give back to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's.”** And we think about that, and we think, “oh yeah, that's good,” because we need to give to Caesar what is Caesar's. So, we should pay our taxes, right? There's another thing he said there that I think we often miss, and to God's what is God's. So, what is God's? And we think, oh, yeah, I'll tithe you know if I go to church, I'm going to give ten percent, or some percentage. I'm going to give generously, right? That's not what he's saying.

Whose image is on the coin? Caesars. Whose image is on you? God's. You've been made in the Imago Dei. God's image. So, what is it that you're to do? To live as a sacrifice to God. Here is my everything God. You are in control. I am not in control. I wake up and say what would you have me do today? What do you have for me today? Who would you have me talk to you? Where would you have me go? I am your servant God. That is the Christian faith. Some of you might be hearing that for the first time. It's Christianity 101. I don't say that to try to make you feel dumb. I'm just saying because we've been going to church and we've moved so far away from that. The basic of Christianity is I am here and I am a servant to the Creator of the heavens and the earth. I do everything he asks me to do. Do you trust him?

Let's go back in verse 18. And we've already used that word slaves. I know that that word has such a connotation today. We're going to talk about it. It says in verse 18, **18 Slaves, in reverent fear of God submit yourselves to your masters, not only to those who are good and considerate, but also to those who are harsh. 19 For it is commendable if someone bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because they are conscious of God. 20 But how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it? But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God.** It is impossible for us in 2023 in America to not hear the word *slave* and attach all of the baggage that we have to that word. Now this was written where that specific baggage didn't exist. And slavery meant something different than what we know it to be. And you've probably heard that before and just taken it in faith. I'm going to try to show you really quickly that that's true.

In the Hebrew culture, a slave was an indentured servant. They would serve for a period of time. Six years specifically is what the Scripture says, right? And so, this comes from Exodus 21, <sup>2</sup> **“If you buy a Hebrew servant, he is to serve you for six years. But in the seventh year, he shall go free, without paying anything.** And then verse five, <sup>5</sup> **“But if the servant declares, ‘I love my master and my wife and children and do not want to go free,’** <sup>6</sup> **then his master must take him before the judges.** So, there's a system baked in to determine what is fair and right for you. That's very different than the gross atrocity that we know of in our country's history, right? We can agree that that's a very different thing. But I will tell you, in Roman slavery as Peter is writing this too, there is abuse present. The most common form was someone would worship false gods and then a slave or servant, would respond to the gospel and no longer worship those false gods. Then they would undergo physical abuse and persecution. And this is what Peter is writing too. Why would he say something so crazy? That we would do everything under the lens of how do we help people know Christ? And it is wild. And it is wild.

People will say “well, the Bible affirms or condone slavery.” Genesis to Revelation, nowhere does the Scripture condone slavery, not even this kind. But it was written into a context of which it existed. And so, he's addressing that cultural norm that was there, but nowhere does the Scripture say, if you follow Jesus, you should have slaves. Nowhere will you find that from Genesis to Revelations. I say that because it's important to equip you but also to understand that 20% of the Roman Empire were these indentured servants. And so, he's writing this to that culture. And here he's informing a response of when we are not treated with kindness and dignity. So, how do we apply that today? This is the employee employer relationship in 2023. That's how this applies.

We think hey, oh, I'm here, I'm working for provision doing something, maybe even for an agreed upon time. That is the relationship that applies today. And so, when we read it, we think, oh, that's how I can apply it into my life. And so, my second point is submit to unfair authority.

## 2. *Submit to Unfair Authority.*

That's what he's addressing here; is an unjust, unfair authority. And this is maybe the most forgettable instruction in the Bible, because whenever we come against unfair authority, our first step is usually not "how can I honor God?" But he says if you suffer for doing good. Do you know what I want to do when I suffer for doing good? I want to say, "that's enough, hold on, man. That's not fair. Let me talk to your... Don't you dare infringe upon my rights." Spirit of the air. It's the spirit of the air. And he says, if you get written up for doing something wrong, that's just justice. But if you get written up when you haven't done anything wrong, please know God knows. He can even all that out forever and ever and ever. You're going to be with Him forever and ever and ever and ever. He knows, He is the avenger of such things, the Scripture says. So, what's our goal?

I had a friend Adam, and I was walking closely with Adam in this season, in somewhat of a discipleship relationship, if you will. And Adam was in a very unfair working situation. His boss strongly did not like him. She was an atheist. Stated she did not like his faith and made fun of him for his faith. Adams brilliant, hard worker, good work ethic and I'm not just saying that naively, like I know him, and have even served with him. So, he had been passed up for a raise for several years and was still making the same amount of money. There was a lot of injustice around this. And a friend, his dear friend, raised up and just said, "Hey, I'm going to work for this

startup, and I would love to have you on my team. We would work together. It's 20% more pay right out the gate, annual promotions, performance reviews, way better benefits, and we get to work together. This is awesome. And by the way, are our boss is a believer." And it's like, right, no brainer. Everyone in Adams Life Group, "No brainer." You should take that job. I mean, this is the Lord's provision for your faithfulness. One elder, one of the wisest people I know, said I'm not so sure. Why? He says, "Well I just don't know that God's finished with your assignment where you're at. I mean, it seems like he has you in this dark place so that people will come to know Christ. And you should just pray and ask the Holy Spirit if he is done with you there?" Well, his words carry so much weight Adam prayed, and just sensed God's not done with me here. So, he stayed where he was at. Which a lot of us would be like, so foolish. It's all about your motive, right? He stayed there. Here's what happened. His boss's son had some real mental illness issues, got caught up in some drugs and she didn't know where to turn. She said, "Hey, I know that's a part of your story, can you help him?" Adam begins to meet with his boss's son. His boss's son trusts in Christ becomes a Christian. His boss becomes a Christian. Okay? And then all of a sudden now he has all this favor. He's promoted in the organization and this other company it folded in a year, in 18 months, and ended up in a lawsuit. No one could have seen that. But it just seems like God blesses you, when you make me your ultimate motive Him. Like when you're operating through the lens of, "Hey, how can I help people know you?" He can bless that. He can come around you and say, "All right, let's have some fun." If I could talk to younger people for a minute. We're so inconsistent in what we desire. I mean, you want to come out of college making six figures and you feel owed. And I know all the GoFundMe and all the opportunities and whatnot. And it's like "how dare my boss call me at 8pm." But were you on

Instagram at 3pm? Because if you're on Instagram at 3pm, they can certainly call you at 8pm  
Like let's make sure we're playing by the same rules, right? And if I'm missing this, I'll just go  
into the supply closet and take some from there because right the company's money is not real  
money, and I get that per diem. I surely want to max it out. So, let's go to the steak restaurant,  
right. And we don't think in terms of stewardship. No one's thinking, hey, how do I make Christ  
our Savior? Why would we? It's not like the Bible says to. Let me read you, Titus 2:10. Teach  
employees to honor their employers in context. **10 and not to steal from them, but to show that  
they can be fully trusted, so that in every way they will make the teaching about God our  
Savior attractive.** The reason you're not a good evangelist is because you're not a good  
employee. That's why no one wants to know your God. That's not for all of you, but that's for  
some of you. If it fits for you, wear it, take it home, change, apply it, ask God to change your  
heart.

Let's dive back in verse 21. **21 To this you were called, because Christ suffered for  
you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.**<sup>22</sup> **“He committed no sin,  
and no deceit was found in his mouth.”**<sup>23</sup> **When they hurled their insults at him, he did  
not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him  
who judges justly.** <sup>24</sup> **“He himself bore our sins” in his body on the cross, so that we might  
die to sins and live for righteousness; “by his wounds you have been healed.”** <sup>25</sup> **For “you  
were like sheep going astray,”**<sup>14</sup> **but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer  
of your souls.** Jesus is our example in how he responded to a very unfair authority. Candidly, an  
authority more unjust than any authority you've ever come in contact with. And Jesus Christ, as  
Christian or little Christ, we are a Christ follower, we look to him at his example and say, “All  
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right, how do I follow in that?" That flies in the face of everything you know in 2023 in the United States of America. Very different than what you've learned. So, we have to look at the Scriptures say, okay, how can I apply this? Jesus was operating under authority. Sounds blasphemous. Not my will but thy will, Lord. Father. Jesus knew this he you see this in John 19. He comes across his face to face with Pilate. Pilate says, <sup>10</sup> **"Do you refuse to speak to me?"** **Pilate said. "Don't you realize I have power either to free you or to crucify you?"** <sup>11</sup> **Jesus answered, "You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above.** Jesus knew that God is our ultimate authority. And that's my third and final point.

*3. God is our ultimate authority.*

Peter knew this. Acts chapter 5 verse 29, he says, this, <sup>29</sup> **Peter and the other apostles replied: "We must obey God rather than human beings!** And we love that verse. We must obey God rather than human being. We're going to take that verse put in our pocket, leave here. I must obey God, rather than human beings. Okay, well, let's just look at the context. Here's the context. They were preaching the gospel. They got arrested for preaching the gospel, they're in jail, an angel shows up, breaks them out of jail. And then they go back to preaching the gospel. They come back, say, Hey, what are you doing? And this is where the line is. We must obey God rather than human being. So, I want you to feel complete permission to use that anytime you're preaching the gospel and you get arrested in the middle of the night and Angel breaks you out of jail and you go back to preaching the gospel. Please be prepared and you can tell them I said that. Pastor at Harris Creek said for me to tell you, we must obey God rather than human beings.



And in fact, it is true that God is our ultimate authority and so we do not sin. We do not sin but be careful that that instruction doesn't feed some ego or pride in you that you're just looking for a fight. Because most of you will die and never have to apply that. That's the reality. And there's all of this other instruction around that that we have to take to heart again. This is hard for me. It's difficult like there is at times a rebellious spirit in me that sometimes is, the prophetic gift if you will, that sometimes is looking for a fight that I have to surrender to the Holy Spirit. And so, all authority is Gods, he's the boss's boss. And it's like when you are on the phone with the phone company, and it's not going well and you say, hey, I need to talk to your manager. And they say hold on one second, put you on hold for 17 minutes. And then you're like, I need to talk to your boss. And they say okay, one minute, put you back on hold. You're like, hey, I need to talk to whoever is like the senior manager. What I'm trying to tell you is God is the senior senior senior senior manager. And he has over all authority. And he's doing something bigger than what you see even through corrupt authority. I mean, absolute authority corrupts absolutely. That's the problem with Nero. He's a sovereign, so, he thinks. I mean, he has all the power in the world to walk through the city and do whatever he wants. He can publicly pour gasoline on a building and throw and match on it and nobody can touch him. And for that reason, I struggle to trust someone in absolute power. And God is saying you don't have to, you trust me. You trust me. I'm doing something bigger than what you see. You understand your role. That's what you need to do, JP. You need to understand your role. I mean, you have got to think these guys that put nails through Jesus's hands, Jesus's feet. It's not like they got away with it. And the person who instructed them too. It's not like they got away with it. Like that same spirit, who was nailed to a cross is the one who preserved this text for us. For God is the avenger of such thing.

In summary, submit to every human authority, even unfair authority, because God is our ultimate authority. I told you when I got here, I was going to keep a story in front of you. And I was going to tell you every year and I don't think I've done a good job with that. Seems appropriate to share it again this morning. And that is, just 21 years ago, I was at a club and someone invited me to a church. Now I went hung over, I smelled like smoke from the night before, I sat in the back row, and I began to wrestle with what do I really believe about God? And I really had this bias against Christianity because I was born in America and I thought, what are the odds? If I was born in India, I'd be Hindu. China, I'd be Buddhists. Iran I'd be Muslim. Israel might be Jewish. What are the odds?

And as I began to explore, "hey, who is God," I went back to that church, and I heard a story about a horse. And it was a story about a stallion, a wild stallion that just wanted to be free. And I resonated with that. I wanted to be a millionaire before I was 30. I was living in a penthouse condo, different watches, different suits, trying to live the dream in this world, right? I wanted to be free. That's the cry of my heart. I want freedom. So, this horse just wants to be free. And in his freedom, he has to find food, has to find water, and has to find shelter from the elements. All while these local cowboys and villages were trying to capture this horse and take him home this beast of an animal. And I'm like no, no don't capture the horse he's free. It's said one day that a cowboy successfully got a rope around the horse's neck and took him home and put him in a fence. No, he's caged! But he loved him and cared for him. Broke him. He was able to ride him. And when he would ride him, he would lead him to food and he would lead him to water, and he would provide shelter for him from the elements. And it was this line right here, he said it wasn't until he was fully submissive to his master that he truly experienced freedom for the first time.

And the Holy Spirit just went (gestures towards heart). And I went back and I listened to that message and it was the most forgettable story you could ever imagine. It wasn't even like an opener or closer. It was just like tucked away somewhere hidden in between. I talked to the pastor he didn't even remember saying it. But the Holy Spirit got me. And I just thought if there's a God and He created everything and he spoke this into existence, and he formed me in my mother's womb and he numbered the hairs on my head. Then what am I going to do in this life, but surrender everything to him? I said God, here I am. I'll do whatever you ask me to. I didn't know five years later he was going to say okay, now go work for the church. I had no idea at that time. Just didn't know. That was the moment. So, I don't know if somebody needs to hear that this morning. But it's not until you're fully submissive to a good, loving, right, and sovereign master that you will ever experience freedom.

Let me pray that you would be. Father help us, as I say every week, we're going to need your help with that. I mean, it's so easy hearing this to get stuck at some instruction. To think about Wait, hold on, hold on, but... and just to not hear what's after that. And so, I trust you with that Lord, just that you that you would swirl in the hearts of women and men all the things that you need us to hear. And we're not strong enough to change on our own so that your Holy Spirit would change in us all the things that need to change. And Father the things that I said that are inconsistent with your desire, your Scripture, your Holy Spirit, before a note is sung on this last song, I just pray that they would be forgotten, erased from their memory. But the things that are of you God, I pray that they stick.

