

THE FORMATION AND FUNCTION OF THE CHURCH

Taught by Bruce Bickel

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Heavenly Father, we assemble this morning to sit at your feet with a sense of awe, a sense of reverence and sense of dignity, realizing that we are coming before you because you alone are our King who can pardon our sin. You alone are our Master who can prevent us from being attacked by the evil one, and you alone are the One who can grant us saving faith. So Father, we just pray that you would remove all the frustrations of this week, that you'd be pleased to open our eyes once again, that we might behold you more clearly for Christ's sake. Amen.

Continuing our study of the theme, which is the formation and function of the church. Over the recent months, we've been looking at the big picture of the ecclesia, the assembly, the gathering of God's people. We looked at Chapter 1 of the book of Ephesians, of how the church was formed. The church meaning the ecclesia, the body. Then we saw how one enters into that body, through the salvation by grace—by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, revealed in the Scripture alone, for the glory of God alone.

Now we began to talk last week about some introductory thoughts about the expression of the ecclesia, the gathering, of the local church, and what does that begin to look like. We touched last week that the church leadership is different in the Kingdom than it is in the system of this world—we're going to get into that in later weeks—understanding the contrast between what the world says leadership is and what the Kingdom describes leadership as.

Before we understand leadership—those whom God has qualified to be church leaders—because we don't pick church leaders. We identify them. We identify whom God has equipped. We have this idea that the church is a democracy. It is not. It's a theocracy. It is under the supreme power of God. It is not something that you and I invent. It is something that is instructive, not constructive. In other words, we don't go construct a leadership style, or construct a means of leadership; we are instructed as to what it looks like and what it is.

The church, the body of Christ, locally is not an invention of some ecclesiastical body, but it's a structure that Christ has given because it's an expression of his living, physical body. Christ does have a living body, that is you and me, the ecclesia, the gathering, the assembling of his people.

We saw last week that Christ is the Chief Shepherd. We saw that he is the Great Shepherd. We saw that he is the Head of the Church, and we saw that He is the Bishop of our souls. Now that's all positionally because He's describing for us in the Scripture his role as being the Head of the Church. When we talked last week about the Church not being a democracy, a theocracy, what we're meaning, that comes under the power, the rule of the Holy Spirit of God's Kingdom of God's power. We take our orders from Him. They come from Him. We don't make up our own orders.

There are three elements of Church government that flow from Kingdom authority. Before I do that, let me just say this. We talk a lot about calling ourselves the Brave Men of Friday Morning. That's a good title. It's something that's reminding us that we need to have a warrior mentality. That doesn't mean that we have warlike activity. There's a difference. A warrior's mentality is you see the mission and nothing deters you from ever accomplishing it. You make sure that you're committed to that, and a warrior mentality is that you always seek the accomplishment of your mission, because it is your mission that defines who you are. Now we're not talking about warlike activities, which would be raping, pillaging, all those other things. I'm not talking about that. I'm talking about a mindset.

Every great battle in history has had some sort of a battle cry. When you look at the Scottish fighting for independence, their battle cry was, “Wallace! Wallace! Wallace!” When you saw the battle between the Mexicans and the Texans, it was “Remember the Alamo!” In World War II, we had a battle cry that was, “Remember Pearl Harbor.”

Now we have, as the ecclesia, we have a battle cry, and it’s found in the disciple’s prayer in Matthew 6, commonly known as the Lord’s Prayer. I prefer to refer to it as The disciple’s prayer because the disciples ask Him how to pray and He said, “This is how you should pray. The manner, the method and the means of your prayer is this.” And so really, in my mind, it’s the disciples’ prayer. But in that—the Lord’s prayer or the disciple’s prayer—is our battle cry. You see that in one of the petitions, and it is this, “Thy Kingdom come.” That’s the battle cry of the church, “Thy Kingdom come.” We need to realize that that’s our mission on everything. And so it is not our role to create a new paradigm for what the Church is going to be; it’s to receive the instructions of what it is given because our mission is this, “Thy Kingdom come.” That’s our battle cry. As you and I go into battle of this world, our battle cry is, “Thy Kingdom come. Your Kingdom come.” That’s really what unites us in all our mission mindedness.

When I was at the Naval Academy my senior year, came into a course called Leadership. Our professor divided us into five different small groups and he said, “Here’s your assignment for the next semester.” This was in between my varsity football and varsity baseball season, so it was in January, and it would go all the way till May. He said, “Over the next 16 weeks, the next four months, this is what I want you to do in your individual small groups. I want you to pick somebody in the course of human history who you discern to be a leader. Study their life and come back and report and write a 300-page report on why that person was a leader. We’re going to see if we can discern any common traits of leadership in the five men whom you pick today.” Well here are the five people we picked. One group studied Adolf Hitler, one group studied Mahatma Gandhi, my group studied the life of Christ, one group studied John F. Kennedy, and one group studied Martin Luther King.

We all took off working in our small groups of five midshipmen. Four months later, 16 weeks later, we came back—the last week of the semester—and each of us had a day to present our findings. The genius of this course instruction was this, brothers, all five men had the same three characteristics. They were identical. Now granted, they were all lived out and manifested and demonstrated radically differently, but they all the same three characteristics of leadership, and here they are. The first one was this—they all had an image of themselves. They all had an image of themselves. The group who studied the life of Adolf Hitler said that Adolf Hitler was extremely insecure. They traced the maturation of his development with his peer group, with his family, within the Nazi political system. They even said the creation and the design of the Nazi uniform and the little mustache he wore were all a reflections of how he viewed himself as a very, very insecure person who had to be a control person. What was his style of leadership? You see, his style of leadership flowed out of how he viewed himself. And so his style of leadership was what? He’s a despot. He was a dictator.

We saw the same principle in the life of Christ. My group, who studied His life, we saw that He had an image of himself. He knew this—that He was God’s Son. That’s a rather healthy self image. As a result of that, His style of leadership was one of servanthood. But it flowed out of the same principle of how they viewed themselves.

You see, when Don took us a couple of weeks ago in this wonderful teaching he gave us on what we were compared to what we are, we need to really believe who the world says we are. No, we need to believe what God says we are. The real battle ground for us in our style of leadership is going to be, “Who do you say you are? What is the image you have of yourself?” Is it what the world says you’re not? Remember the only thing a resume reveals is what you’ve not accomplished. It never reveals what you’ve accomplished. It always reveals what you haven’t done.

The world is always going to say, “You’re enough is never enough.” Now is that the image you have of yourself? If it is, your leadership style is going to flow out of that imagery that you have of yourself. Or do you really see yourself as God sees you? Just let me take you back to a passage. Let’s go to the book of Titus for moment—Titus 3. Look at Chapter 3 of the book of Titus. Now here are our marching orders. Paul, as you know, is writing to his young ministerial cohort, his protégé by the name to Titus, a young pastor, and he’s saying, “Titus, here’s the important things you do.” I’m reading from the English Standard Version, “Remind them to be submissive to rulers and to authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work, to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy toward all people.” Now that’s what he’s saying you need to do.

One of the wonderful things about Scripture is this—when we find out our duty, when we find out the doctrine, the standard, of our style of life as a believer, right after that, it will always give you a reason. In other words, reason comes beforehand. People don’t want excuses. Information beforehand is the reason, information afterwards, an excuse, and nobody likes excuses. Now he just gave us our marching orders. As Brave Men of Friday, this is what we need to do. That is our battle dress. This is our battle cry is, “Thy Kingdom come.” Now here’s the reason, “For we ourselves were once (past tense) foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another. But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit.”

Who do you believe? Do you believe what you once were? And that’s how you act out your style of leadership? Or do you believe who you are? He now says, you know, you used to be that way, but you’re no longer that way. The image that you and I have of ourselves, whom we believe, the system of this world, what they tell us, or what we believe the Scripture tells us about ourselves, is going to establish the image of who you are, which is going to be the basis of your leadership style. You’re either going to be a despot or a servant. That’s what we learned in that study at the Naval Academy.

You see, the first thing is they all had an image of themselves. But it was the second thing that got my attention the most, and it was this. It was not their charisma or their personality. It was not their charisma or their personality that gave them their base of power; it’s who or what they represented. It wasn’t their personality. It wasn’t their charisma. It was who or what they represented. Take the case of Mahatma Gandhi. Those who studied Mr. Gandhi’s life said that he was not one who was very loquacious or vociferous. He was not one who we would say in our Western vernacular had a budding, charismatic personality. He was one who would rather sit around with a few of his friends and meditate than to have somebody else give the instructions of what they decided to do. But Gandhi is known for one thing—self control. Bringing his thoughts, words, deeds and attitudes into constant obedience to benefit others because of this. You see, the second principle we learned in understanding this was it was not their charisma or their personality; it was who or what they represented. It means this—to be a good leader you’ve got to be a better follower.

The first characteristic of an outstanding leader is that you’re a follower. The question is what are you following? You see, Gandhi followed something bigger than himself, and that was the movement of independence in the nation of India. Every decision he made, he ran it through this grid of who or what he represented and he represented a movement.

Guys, you and I represent the Kingdom come. That’s our battle cry. We need to act like it. We need to be far more aggressive than we are in taking on the system of this world because of who or what we represent. It is not going to be your skill set, it’s not going to be your background, it’s not going to be your giftedness that gives you your base of power for leadership. It’s going to be who or what you

represent. You and I represent the King of kings, The Lord of lords, the Master, the King of the universe. My goodness! That's what we represent. That's our basis of power. It's not your personality. It's not your skill set. I'm not suggesting those aren't important and cannot be used. Of course they can. But that doesn't give you your base of power. What gives you your base of power is who or what you represent.

Why is it the Russians backed down from John F. Kennedy in the Cuban Missile Crisis in the 1960's? I know—it was he was married to Jackie. {LAUGHTER} It was his charismatic personality that the Russians feared. Correct? It was the Kennedy mystique. The litany of the Kennedys. No. Of course not. The reason they backed down is because of who or what he represented. He represented something bigger than himself. He represented the United States of America.

You see, the second thing we learned was this. It's not your and my personality that's going to give us our base of power. It's the recognition of what you and I recognize we represent. And guys, we represent this—Thy Kingdom come. That's what we represent. We represent the body of Christ who's given us instructions to be the living illustration of His body in physical form. He gives us our instructions as to what we need to be, and it is not our job to go construct something different and create a new paradigm. We just need to follow the orders we've been given from the King of kings, the Lord of lords and the Master and the Head of the church—the Great Shepherd—and also the Bishop of our souls.

You see, that's what our leadership in the local church needs to understand. They're representing something other than themselves. Leadership is never about you. Leadership is never about me. It's about who or what you represent. And brothers, the Scriptures say that you and I represent the ecclesia, the body of Christ. When we are placed in leadership positions in the church because God has qualified us for that, we need to represent that our base of power doesn't come because of your position in this world. It's because God in His grace has created a mature life in you, and that other people recognize, is worthy of the third characteristic that we saw. Are you ready for this?

Here's the third thing we saw in that study. People follow. People follow. There's no leadership unless there's followership. The question for you and me, guys, in the church is this. Why would somebody choose to follow you? Why would somebody choose to follow you? When I came out of Annapolis, I was told I was a leader by an act of Congress because I had gold braid on my collar. Then I was reading John 5 and John 8 one day in my devotions. The greatest leader the world ever saw said this, "I initiate nothing on my own. I only do those things I see the Father do." That was contrary to everything I had learned in four years, because I was told as a leader, you initiate. Notice what Jesus says, "I don't do that. All I do is I look around and I see what the Father's doing and I do what He's doing." How often times have you heard somebody say, "The Lord's leading me to create a ministry," and we go create a ministry and then we pray that the Lord will bless it? That's backwards. We ought to say this, "Lord, what are you doing? I'm going to join that, and I know it will be blessed."

Remember the story of Joshua, when he was going into battle? He stands and he sees this warrior standing in front of him. He walks up to this warrior and says, "Who are you?" The warrior says, "I'm Captain of the Lord's hosts," and Joshua said, "Who's side are you on?" The response was this, "Neither. I'm here to take over." You see, the real issue is this—not is God on my side, but are we on His side? You see, that's the difference of leadership in this world and leadership in the church. It's we realize that we're on His side, and are we sensitive to the things that God is doing. Are we sensitive to the things that he is doing, and we're saying, "We're going to join that, because our battle cry is Thy Kingdom come." Our power base for our leadership in the church is who or what we represent.

So brothers, the real question for you and me is this. Why would somebody choose to follow you? Why would somebody choose to follow you? You see what holds the church together—it's submission. That's

what holds the church together. It's submission, because that's what binds the unity of the church in the midst of diversity, is that people are submitting to something bigger than themselves, and that is Thy Kingdom come. It's our battle cry. It's the realization that we're submitting to something that is bigger than me because it's not about me; it's about something bigger than that. And that requires that we exercise the character quality of self control—bringing your thoughts, words, deeds and attitudes into constant obedience to benefit others and to fulfill your mission. Be a follower.

The three elements that flow out of the government in the church from Christ, first of all, would be Kingdom authority—they Kingdom come. Christ rules his church by his Word and his spirit shapes church government. Christ rules His church by His Word and His Holy Spirit shapes church government. Christ's rule is absolute. We don't reduce it, we don't modify it, and we don't add to it. The church is the new theocracy of the state and not the state. Christ's power is spiritual. It is not political. Christ's power is ministerial, meaning serving. It is not imperial, meaning imposed. Christ's power is declarative, not legislative. You don't vote on it. He declares it. We can only declare His will and work, we don't legislate new doctrine, because we've been given the structure of the government of the church.

Often times, as we talked about, there are such things as practicing spiritual worship, without spiritual direction. Leaders are not given authority to exercise as they choose; they are not vicars ruling in his place, but they're really servants in His grace. That's because this—that you understand what it means to be a follower. You see, church leadership is followership. We're following the head of the church. How often times you hear—I've even heard it as it relates to ethnic groups—there's the black church, there's the white church. I thought it was Christ's church. I was in a meeting several years ago and a woman who was very gracious, she said, "There you are. You white guys are taking over the church again. We have a black church." I said, "I didn't realize it was a black church. I thought it was Christ's church." You see, guys, you've got to think right about the ecclesia, the body, the local church. He's the head of the church. What holds us together is submission. That's why the body is called to submit.

The organic form of the church maintains the church by submission. Now I want you to go to 1 Peter 2:13-23. Now this is the big picture of submission to authority. Often times people say, "What church should I become a member of?" One of the questions, which is your responsibility and my responsibility as a church member, is to submit to the authority of the church, so one of the things you have to ask yourself is can I submit to the elders. Do you know what the elders represent? Do you know what the doctrine of the church is?

Let me tell you, those of you who are involved in the Anglican denomination here at this church. There's a wonderful book written by John Rogers on the 39 Articles. I would encourage you guys who go to Christ Church at Grove Farm to get that book because it is the history of your denomination way back to the roots of The Reformation. When you compare the 39 Articles that Dr. John Rogers has written about, you compare that to the First London Baptist Confession and the Westminster Confession of Faith, and you're going to see they're identical. Do you know that?

Are you aware...are the people here at Christ, are they aware of what the 39 articles mean? You ought to know that, because that's what you're being asked to submit to. If you're a Baptist, do you know the First London Confession? You're going to have to be asked to submit to that because your leaders represent that. If you're Presbyterian do you know the Westminster Confession? You need to know that, because that's your responsibility as a church member is to submit to the authority of the church as those who are the leaders. You've got to understand what the leaders represent. Remember, their base of power is not in their personality or their character. Their base of power comes from who or what they represent. What do those elders represent? In the Anglican denomination, do you understand that your leaders represent the 39 Articles? Or do they? If they don't, you're going to have a tough time

submitting to them. But if they do, you can. You see, it is the membership's responsibility to hold the leadership accountable.

A couple of years ago... Yes sir?

Audience Member: It's in our by-laws.

But do you know them?

Audience Member: But no one knows the by-laws.

Okay, it's in the by-laws; it's a nice, written piece of paper, but do you know what they are? What do they mean? That ought to be your inquirer's class. It ought to be the 39 articles. If you're Presbyterian, it ought to be the Westminster Confession. If you're a Baptist, it ought to be the First London Confession. You ought to know those things, because that's what you're being asked to submit to, because that's what your leaders represent, theologically. That's what they're supposed to represent.

You see, several years ago, I was on a—one of my foundations supports Native American causes—and I was out visiting the Lakota Sioux Reservation in South Dakota. I was talking to one of the historians of that tribe about the leadership style of Red Cloud. Red Cloud was one of the great warrior leaders of the Lakota Sioux Tribe. His principle was this—because he understood followership—he said, “It is the responsibility of the tribe to hold leaders accountable.” The way you do that is you don't follow them if they're not doing the right job. You go follow somebody else. That's how they pick their leader.

You know how they identify leaders? By how many people were following them. And he said, “It is the responsibility of the tribe to hold us, as leaders, accountable to what we represent. And if you don't like what we're don't follow us.” Now guys, we need to hold each other accountable. It is the responsibility of the church membership to hold the leadership accountable. And that means this. Do you understand what they represent? What is their base of power? It is not their personality. It not their charisma. It's not their position in society. It's what they represent theologically. Do they represent the 39 Articles if you're an Anglican? Do they represent the First London Confession if you're a Baptist? Do they represent the Westminster Confession if you're a Presbyterian? Do you understand that? Yes, Don.

Don: *There are people, I know, who say, “Well, we just believe the Bible.” Well that sounds nice, but it's too vague.*

Yes.

Don: *Because, you know, the Bible is a big book, [UNCLEAR] these confessions, they're not infallible, we know that, but they do, they give a very good summary as to what the basic doctrines of the Bible are, and they're a safe haven [UNCLEAR] to guard against heresy.*

Absolutely. That's a good illustration. It's an explanation of the contents of Biblical truth. It's just a way of helping us understand the magnificence of God's inerrant, sufficient Word. Yes.

Audience Member: *In the Declaration of Independence...*

What about it?

Audience Member: *...the government is, gains power to the consent of the government.*

Of the people. Who ought to be holding our leaders accountable in America today?

Audience: We should.

It's you and me. It's you and me. We don't like them, put them out. That's our responsibility. We are getting exactly what we ask for, do you realize that? Our nation got exactly what we asked for in this administration. Because we said that's what we want.

Are you familiar with the study that was done in 1776 by the economist from England by the name of Alexander Tyler who did a study of the Greek city states? He traced the development of the Greek city states—Athens, Sparta—and said a democracy cannot survive over 300 years, because every democracy ends up in a dictatorship. What happens over time, every generation, you vote into office people who are going to give you more money from the government coffers. That's what happens. His history of the study of Greek city states was this. They started with independence, they ended up in dependency, and it was because every generation voted in people who would give them more money from the government coffers and they had to work less. Because they thought it was in their best interest. That's why every democracy that's existed, including ours, has followed that trend.

Audience Member: Who did the study?

Alexander Tyler. He was an economist and did it in 1776, right at the formation of the colonies of the United States. He warned the colonies of this, "Make sure you don't follow this democratic trend." What happened over the last 250 years? What are we doing now? We're voting people in office who will give us more from the government coffers. His theory is this—this will end up in a dictatorship, because somebody's going to have to stop it, and that person is going to be a dictator. Now I'm not saying that's going to happen...all I'm saying, guys, is this—you and I hold leadership accountable, and that also is in the church. We're going to get into the qualifications of church leadership. You don't vote people into office. You recognize that God is qualified. Yes.

Audience Member: [UNCLEAR]

Please do.

Audience Member: This study was done in 1776. The democracies he was studying weren't actually constitutional republics.

Correct. That is correct.

Audience Member: I don't know how that would apply.

That's a good question. There's a difference between a constitution republic and a democracy. That's correct. I don't know. He didn't get into that because the states were just now being formed; the colonies were just now being formed. I think the principle is there that we can look at. The veracity of his study was this, that over generations, we expect more from the government and take less responsibility ourselves. I think that's the spirit behind it. That's the application for us today. Yes, Brian.

Brian: I think you could further apply that to the church in the fact that we, in the church, don't submit to each other. We've abdicated what we should be doing as a church and have let the government or other people take over, instead of self-sacrifice and looking to our own interests and helping others.

Absolutely. The same principle applies in the church. That's my whole point of saying the thing that

makes the church work is submission. Submission to Godly leadership whom God has qualified because your responsibility and my responsibility as a member of a local church is to submit. That's our role. Yes.

***Audience Member:** How do you control...how do you feel about politics, governmental politics within the church, if discussed within the church atmosphere?*

The question is what do you think about governmental politics being discussed in the church?

***Audience Member:** Yes.*

Any other questions? {LAUGHTER} Tell you what, folks, if we were fulfilling our responsibilities inside the church, we'd be impacting the government.

***Audience:** Amen. That's right.*

We need to be impacting our own local fellowships by being submissive to what the Scripture calls in the design of church and it's mission—Thy Kingdom come. If we were doing that, we would be impacting the politics of our country. The tragedy is we've lost our salt and we've lost our light, the power of the church. We've lost that because we have just gone the way of political correctness.

My response is let's get our own house in order—the church. Get it in order. And by nature, the result of that is the consequence will be it will impact the politics. But we don't see that because we are not doing that. Yes.

***Audience Member:** Right now, you're discussing leadership and the followership. Right?*

Right

***Audience Member:** And who we follow makes a statement of who we are as well. And we follow the church, but if we also start following certain governmental behavior or certain fan clubs or certain things, that makes a statement. If that conflicts with our Christianity, we should be aware of it. Right?*

Right.

***Audience Member:** That's part of the discussion this that's going on in our church at least.*

Sure. We've got to be aware of that. But my point is this—let's get our own house in order. When the local church is functioning in its designed power structure because of the ordination of how God has created it through the body of Christ, and the instructions that God has given the church to function, we will, by nature, impact society. Now I'm not saying it's a copout. All I'm saying is guys we've got to back to first base and deal with the local church and its power. Yes, Bill.

***Bill:** In the church, we can't get Christians to behave like Christians. What makes us so sure that we can make non-Christians behave like Christians?*

Yes. Good question.

Bill: The other point I wanted to make is about the 39 Articles of Faith. The reason they're ignored, I think, is because people don't understand them because they don't understand the Scripture, and they don't want to understand the Scripture; they're not into the Scripture. What can we do about that?

Okay, we're going to get into that when we start talking in a couple of weeks about what I'm going to call imperatives or essentials of a healthy church. I use the word "healthy" because I want to use the posture of the church as a living body. It's alive. And so we are healthy when we're not healthy. So what are some of the imperatives of a healthy church, which means it's growing, it's maturing, it's deepening. What are those? The first one is going to be, in my position, is going to be expository preaching. It's got to start with that.

Audience Member: Amen.

And we'll get into that. So we're going to talk about what are the critical ingredients of a healthy church. Not a perfect church, because the moment you join it, it's not longer perfect. {LAUGHTER} But we're going to talk about what are the indications of a healthy church, because Bill, you're exactly right.

Audience Member: Bruce, are you going to, in this whole subject [UNCLEAR] talk about, what your responsibility is as a church member when you see the church...[UNCLEAR].

Yes. We're going to get into that. The question is are we going to talk about what is our responsibility as a member of a church when we see the church going in the wrong direction. Yes, we have responsibility. That's one of our membership responsibilities and we'll get into that.

Let me take you to 1 Peter, because I want to show you the major context of the power of submission. Beginning in 1 Peter 2:13, "Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good. For this is the will of God..." You want to know what God's will for your life is? Be submissive. Right there you see it. It's in black and white. This is the will of God. You don't find out what it is; you're found in His will. You don't find out His will, you find in it. You don't quit looking for...I want to find out God's will. You don't find it out; you're found in it. And one of the in it's is this—am I submissive? "For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people. Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God. Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor." Now let's read on, "Servants,"—now here's into the workforce—"Servants, be subject to your masters with all respect, not only to the good and gentle but also to the unjust. For this is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly. For what credit is it if, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God. For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly."

Now there's a difference, guys, and I want you to notice the phraseology there. It says that, "He continued in trusting Himself." You and I, there's a difference between submission and in trusting. When you and I submit to our authority, in the local church, at work, in our culture, you're taking that act of submission, by you're entrusting that action to God. Where are never told to entrust ourselves to God, I mean to the authority. We're told to entrust ourselves to God. You take your act of submission and you say, "I'm going to take this act of obedience, and I'm going to entrust that to God that He will use it because I know this—that God always leads in triumph."

Now, quite honestly, in our marriage seminars, we need to teach wives that. The Scripture says what? Submit to your husband. Oh you can't talk about that because that's intolerant, that's not politically correct; it's demeaning to women. So we quit talking about submission in the home. Notice the number

of weddings you hear now. They don't use that word in the phrase—submit to your husband, obey your husband. Can't talk about that. It's politically incorrect. So let's change it. Let's get rid of it.

Now you notice the way to get rid of something you don't like, you just quit talking about it. We don't talk about submission at the home anymore because we've just said, "Well let's just avoid it." Over time, the subject now doesn't even come up anymore. There's a whole next generation of young women who have no idea what it means to submit to your husband for the glory of God.

Now we're not talking about authoritative dictatorship. We're talking about a servant's heart on the part of the husband. So there's the other side of the coin—love your wife as Jesus loved the church and sacrificed for it. In balance, we've got to talk about our being sacrificial. We need to talk about their being submissive. Give them a reason to want to do that.

But my point is this. We're never told to entrust ourselves to the government. Never told to entrust ourselves to the leadership. Never told to entrust ourselves to the leadership of the church. We're told to submit to the leadership of the church and take that act and submit that as an act of submission and entrust it to God. That's what you see Jesus did. He submitted to the authority. He didn't revile when he was reviled. He didn't fight back. He didn't do all those things. Now I'm not talking about being a mamby-pamby doormat. I'm not talking about that because we know that's not true when at Jesus' first staff meeting He says, "Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth." The word meek means living according to the power of God. If you think meekness is weakness, try being meek the next time somebody stabs you in the back. That takes the power of God to have a godly response. Meekness is not weakness; it's power under control. The idea of the word meek is putting a bit in a horse's mouth. It's the idea that this magnificent, powerful animal is uncontrollable until you put the bit in his mouth and then you control his power. That's what meekness means. You and I are being controlled by the power of the Holy Spirit in our response, which takes a very, very aggressive response to the way that we submit to things.

What is it that holds the church together? It's submission, but we're all submitting and taking that act individually and entrusting it to God. There's a difference between submitting and entrusting. You see the difference? You're taking your act of being in God's will, which is being submissive, and you're taking being in God's will and you're entrusting that to God, and knowing this, that God always leads in triumphal procession in Christ.

We need to understand this as we move into understanding church leadership, that really what holds the church together is submission, but that act of submission is you're entrusting it to God, and God begins to work. Yes.

***Audience Member:** You mentioned 1 Peter 2 and 13-17 and also Acts 5:29 when Peter and John were put in prison and then released and they were told not to preach the Gospel, and they preached the Gospel. Peter reminded, he said, "We must obey God's authority rather than human authority."*

Correct.

***Audience Member:** "We will speak the Gospel."*

Absolutely. No question.

***Audience Member:** "and we'll cooperate with you as far as everything else, but..."*

Now who...we need to understand this—the ministry of that event was not that they preached the Gospel.

It was they took the consequences of what they decided to do. Ministry occurs when you respond to the consequences of the choices you make. Let me just give you a crass example. During the Vietnam War, there were a lot of people who said, “I’m not going to go to Vietnam; I’m going to go to Canada, because of my spiritual convictions.” Now they were thinking—I’ve talked to some guys who did that—thinking that that was my ministry was to rebel against the government. I said, “No, your ministry was when you went down there and say I can’t do that on conscience, they put me in jail.” That’s my ministry. Because I’m going to show you how it is to respond when I buck authority; I’m going to show you that my response is the ministry. It is not my choosing not to go join the Armed Forces; it’s taking the consequences of the choice I had because of the name of Christ, so I’m not going to go to Vietnam. I’m not going to become an Armed Forces member. Put me in jail because I just broke the law. You see, the ministry occurs while you’re in jail. It’s accepting the responsibilities of the consequences of your choices. That’s when the ministry occurs. And we’ve got it backwards. We think that it’s resisting is the ministry. No. It’s how you respond. Notice, you’re back to Peter again. Jesus is our example. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return. He took the consequences. When he suffered, he didn’t threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly.

Now, we’re reading about that because that was the ministry of how he responded to the consequences of his choices. You see, the real ministry occurs when you say, “I can’t do that. Put me in jail.” That’s when people begin to see the ministry. Yes.

***Audience Member:** I think that you really display that well, and if you think about it, Christ does this also. Christ did what he was supposed to do, irrespective of what was going on around him. So often, we as the body in the church, we see so and so not doing what they should and we rebuke them rather than fixing ourselves first. I was trying to find the Scripture that says the body is made up of many parts and each part has to function properly, so we need to look first at ourselves before we can start teaching others.*

No question, and we at the local church need to be...I’ve yet to... We need to take that collectively, the local church, and ask ourselves what is the church doing. We need to look at ourselves rather than look at the government first. We need to take care of our own house before we start telling somebody else how to do it. Because what’s going to be the power of our ministry in the local church is the consequences of our taking a stand. When they revile us, that is our response to that is going to be the power that we’re going to change society when they see that. We in the local church need to clean up our own act before we start telling the government what they ought to be doing. It’ll be a natural consequence.

***Ted:** Just two things, very quickly. First, [UNCLEAR]... And the second thing that needs attention, I’m sensing this tension on one hand—submission—[UNCLEAR]...about the church, and on the other hand, the need to hold leadership accountable, how to do, how to be in submission to leadership and yet hold them accountable, I mean, this is a huge [UNCLEAR]...its for me.*

Absolutely. It is for everybody. We’re going to get into that next week. We’re going to start getting into that because one our responsibilities is to submit to church leadership. That means are we holding our church leadership accountable. That’s part of our responsibility. We’ll talk about how we do that.

First of all, the way we do that is how are they identified. Got to identify them. We don’t pick them. We identify. So we need to understand who is it that we set apart to be leaders, to whom I have desire to submit. The same thing in hiring. How do you hire people? Most of our mistakes in employment is we don’t hire the right people. We don’t know how to hire, and therefore, we have problems in business. Same thing in the church. We don’t know how to identify church leaders to whom I have the spirit and desire to want to submit. We need to talk about that. We’ll pick that up next week.

Let's pray. Father, we're now touching on some very thin ice and some very issues of great concern for all of us, and we don't have the wisdom to figure all this out. So Father, cleanse us of all unrighteousness and forgive us of all of our sins, those things that are offensive to you so that we will have a mind that is clear to think correctly and think Biblically. We do know, Lord, that your Scripture is sufficient, and Father, we just need the wisdom to discern that. Give us the spirit of discernment and may your Holy Spirit, in the days ahead, fulfill his job description, and that is this, to guide us into all truth. Not truth as I think it should be, or as I think it ought to be, but truth as it revealed in the sufficiency of Scripture. And to that end, all the Brave Men said... Thy Kingdom come. Amen.