

**The Sovereignty of God  
over *All* of Life**

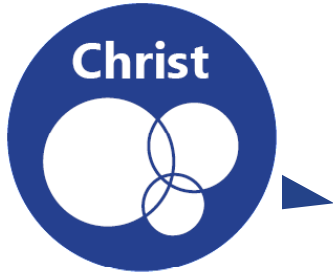
Part 4


**The Sphere of State**

Guest Speaker: Greg Wallace

# TALKINGPOINTS WALKINGPOINTS

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A publication of  the adult discipleship ministry of Triangle Community Church.

**Talk** together about the glory of God's kingdom. –Psalm 145:11  
Love the Lord your God and **walk** in all his ways. –Joshua 22:5

## Questions for Reflection or Discussion

- What from Sunday's message interested you? ...made sense to you? ...confused you?  
...intrigued you? ...upset you? ...encouraged you? ...and **why**?

### Observation—*What do I see?*

**Yes**, there **are** biblically-authorized limitations to our submission to government—and we'll consider them in a moment—but we must not let them dull the impact of our **obligations** listed in Romans 13:1-7.

- **How many** persons must be in subjection to the governing authorities (v. 1)?
- **Which** governing authorities are permitted to disobey (v. 1)?
- **What rationale** is given for our obligation to submit to all governing authorities (v. 1)?
- When we resist governing authorities, **whom** are we **ultimately** resisting (v. 2a)? **Why** is that?
- Nero was the governing authority at the time this was written. **How** do v. 4a & 6 identify Nero?
- We must obey so as to not experience painful consequences (v. 3-5a), but what motive does v. 5b add?
- **How** does v. 7 get beyond external obedience, and address heart motivations?

In what situations does Scripture authorize—in fact, **demand**—disobedience to governing authorities?

### Interpretation—*What does it mean?*

Look up "submit" at Dictionary.com. What do you learn?

What does our culture think about submissive people?

How do you see submission in the life of Christ? What was the result of his submission?

### Application—*What do I do with this?*

Are you a "biblically submissive" person? Where are you on the following continuum:



Because biblical submission is first and foremost to God, it **requires disobedience** to human authorities when they transgress their God-given "sphere of authority". What is your experience with this?

# Sermon Summary

God is the absolute Sovereign over all of his creation and every one of his creatures. When we say God is sovereign, we mean God is in control. He has unstoppable power over all things, which he exercises in accord with his infinite love, wisdom, justice, and mercy through Jesus Christ. Nothing can frustrate God—when all is said and done, Job concludes: “I know that You can do all things, and that no purpose of Yours can be thwarted” (Job 42:2).

While God is sovereign directly over the individual, this series has explored how God also mediates his sovereignty through three institutions: family, church, and state. This week we will consider God’s sovereignty over human government—the sphere that possesses the most coercive power over us and the one, as individuals, that we have the least ability to affect.

## I. General principles of human government

Paul sets forth several basic principles for the civil state and our relationship to it in Romans 13:1-7. These are general principles, not an exhaustive study:

- Human government is established by God, and its rulers are servants of God (v. 1, 4, 6).
- Human government exists to encourage good and punish evil (v. 3-4).
- Resistance to civil authority is opposition to God (v. 2).
- The power of civil rulers is limited (v. 6-7) (see also Matthew 22:15-22).

Does this mean that evil rulers like Hitler, Stalin, and Mao are God’s servants? Yes, in the sense that God permits them to rise to power and then uses them to accomplish his will. There are several examples in the Bible of God using evil rulers to accomplish his purposes, such as with Pharaoh and Moses (Exodus 3:10-12:41; Romans 9:17), Pilate and Jesus (Acts 2:23-24), and the civil persecution against the early church (Acts 8:2). At times, God has used evil rulers to bring judgment on his people and bring them back to righteousness, as when God raised up Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon in order to punish Judah for its repeated idolatry (2 Kings 20:17-18; 24:10-25:30).

Of course, all rulers are accountable to God for their actions. There will be a day of reckoning. After Babylon had fulfilled its purpose, it was judged for its own wickedness (Isaiah 13:19-20) and Nebuchadnezzar suffered individual judgment (Daniel 4). Evil rulers will face consequences on earth and those who die without Christ will face eternity in hell (Psalm 2:16).

## II. Implications for us

- Be a good citizen: pray, obey, pay, and have a say!
- Lower expectations about the state’s role in society.

We do not live in a theocracy, as the people of Israel did in the Old Testament. We should not expect our government to function as a theocracy, nor should we attempt to make it into one.

The state has legitimate powers (e.g., national defense, public safety, justice system for punishing those who harm others, regulation of commerce, etc.). But when we look to the state to provide everything for us (healthcare, education, food, clothing, shelter, etc.), then the state ascends to the place of God.

We also should not expect the state to promote Christianity. The Constitution guarantees religious freedom, not religious sponsorship. We can oppose the state when it acts contrary to Christian norms, but we should not expect the state to aid us in spreading the gospel.

The state should have a limited role in our lives. Paul says in 1 Timothy 2:2 that we should pray “for kings and all who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity.”

- Resist the state when it oversteps its power.

Civil authority is delegated and intermediary, not absolute and final (Romans 13:1; Matthew 22:15-22). It can overstep its authority in two ways. The first is when the state raises itself above God and demands absolute obedience to its authority. The second is when the state acts outside its jurisdiction and intrudes upon the authority of the family or the church.

Resistance to state tyranny can take two forms: soft resistance and hard resistance. Soft resistance is opposing the state through protected channels of change, like advocacy and voting. Hard resistance is when we refuse to obey the state’s commands because they are contrary to God’s commands. We see hard resistance in Acts 4:18-20 and 5:27-29. There may be a time when we declare “we must obey God rather than men.”

- Know that God is still in control when government becomes oppressive.

No human government will be perfect because it is run by fallen human beings. As Lord Acton said, “Power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely.” When the state slouches toward tyranny, we have these promises from Scripture: Psalm 33:10-11; 2 Chronicles 20:6; Proverbs 21:1; Romans 8:28; Job 42:2. God is still on his throne, and his purposes will not be thwarted!

**Beginning Soon!**



The **Art** and **Skill** of  
**Redemptive Relationships**

We all make small talk—but think about **that one friend** who **listens** especially well, **asks** good questions, and **connects** the riches of Scripture to what's on your mind. That's a **redemptive relationship!** We can **learn** the art and skill of spiritual friendship.

**Who?** all TCC adults  
**What?** learn to have wise friendships that bring people closer to God  
**When?** Twelve weeks, **beginning February 5<sup>th</sup>**,  
**Wednesday nights (6:30-8:00pm)** **or**  
**Thursday mornings (9:30-11:00am)**  
**or anytime On-Demand!**

**Where?** TCC campus

**How?** simply **scan here** for complete info →



**Just 10 days!**



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## Digging Deeper in Your Daily Quiet Time

Perhaps nobody in history walked the fine line of state jurisdiction better than Daniel & friends. Let's use the "Five Question Bible Study" method to explore their wisdom...

**Monday**— Study Daniel 1:1-21.

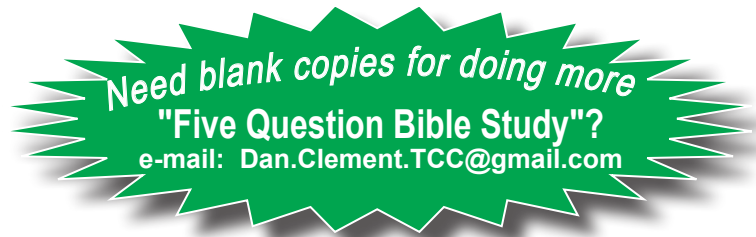
**Tuesday**— Study Daniel 3:1-30.

**Wednesday**— Study Daniel 4:1-37.

**Thursday**— Study Daniel 5:1-31.

**Friday**— Study Daniel 6:1-28.

**Saturday**— Study Ezekiel 14:12–20.



Bible Text: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



What idea particularly strikes me from this text? [Note in which verse(s) it is found.]



What question does this text raise in my mind—and how would **this text** answer it?



What about Jesus Christ—his character and/or his redemption—relates to this text?



What action must I take as a result of this text? Be concrete and specific.



With whom will I share what I learned from this text? [and what was their response?]