

=THE CHRISTIAN LIFE=

Lesson 2

Respectfulness

AIM: to teach my pupils respect for position, persons, and especially, authority.

INTRODUCTION: In a free group of human beings there must be authority. For example, a nation should have a king or president; a state should have a governor; a city needs a mayor; a church needs a pastor. Every organization composed of human beings needs someone to be the leader. This leader is chosen by the majority of the responsible people. Once the leader is chosen, all should respect the authority. In our generation, respect is being ridiculed with the result that anarchy often prevails. We must bear in mind that once an organization chooses a leader, all should respect his authority. For example, when a church calls a pastor, all of the members should have a part in choosing him; then all the members should accept the authority that God gives him. When a city chooses a mayor by a majority vote, all of the people, including the minority, should respect his authority. This could be transferred to any organization. This is what we call "law and order." We have a right to help choose our leader, and then all should respect and honor his position.

- I. CHILDREN SHOULD RESPECT PARENTS. Read Ephesians 6:1. God has made it so the parents have authority over the children. Because of this, the child should honor and respect them. Ephesians 6:1 says, "...this is right." Ephesians 6:2 says this "...is the first commandment with promise." That promise is given in Ephesians 6:3 where God promises long life to people who obey parents. The big nation on the earth which has lived the longest has been China. Chinese people have been known for their respect for age and for their parents. God has given parents to their children. Children should be taught to respect and honor them. This should be manifested in obedience, in proper respect, in the saying of "Yes, sir," "No, sir," "Yes, ma'am," "No, ma'am," etc.

- II. THE EMPLOYEE SHOULD RESPECT THE EMPLOYER. In this case the leader is not chosen by the follower. However, the follower chooses on his own volition to work for a certain employer. When he so chooses, he obligates himself to honor, respect, and obey his leader or his employer. Ephesians 6:5a says, "Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters." This means that those who serve or work for another should respect him because of his position. Maybe a person has an employer who is hard to bear with or is unreasonable. Still, he is to be respected! The employee should give a good day's work for his salary. He should not be arrogant, rebellious, or insubordinate. Even if he does not like the boss, he is to respect his position, according to Ephesians 6:5.

One of the reasons for this is found in Ephesians 6:6. It tells us that we are "servants of Christ," and because we are, our testimony at work is important. Hence, we should have the testimony of being respectful, of doing jobs well, and of being obedient to those who have authority over us.

- III. WE SHOULD RESPECT THE GOVERNMENT. In America we have the privilege of choosing those who lead us. Romans 13:1 tells us that the governments "are ordained of God." This does not mean a particular government is pleasing to God, but it means that the fact that man is to have government is a fact "ordained of God." It must be understood that "every soul be subject unto the higher powers." Notice the words, "every soul." All of us are to be subject to the government chosen by the majority of us. Someone would say, "But what if the government is not what it should be?" If the government is not what it should be, the fact that we are to be governed is ordained of God. When Paul wrote Romans 13, Nero was the king. He was perhaps the most wicked king Rome ever had. Nevertheless, he was the king and was to be respected as such.

- IV. WE ARE TO RESPECT THE LAW. Not only are we to respect our leaders, governors, kings, presidents, etc., but we are to respect and obey the laws that they make, as long as these do not conflict with a definite command of God. In I Peter 2:13 we find that we are to obey "every ordinance" made by our leaders. In other words, Christians are to be law-abiding people. We are to respect the laws of the government, the school, the church, the home, and other organizations to which we belong. If a duly instituted authority makes an ordinance, we are to respect and obey it.

When one resists such authority, he can expect punishment from God. This is found in Romans 13:2 which says that those who do not obey the ordinance of God, which here is to obey the ruler, “shall receive to themselves damnation” (judgment). God will punish those who do not respect authority.

- V. WE ARE TO RESPECT TAXES. In Romans 13:6 we find that we are to pay taxes as good citizens. Of course, this would include tithing to the Lord. It would also include the paying of taxes voted on by those whom we have chosen as our leaders. We will not always agree with the taxes, and they will not always be just, but we are to pay them. It is true that bad laws are made. It is also true that because there are no perfect people, we have to choose imperfect laws, and this is sad. It is worse, however, for anarchy to prevail. It is better to pay an unjust tribute or tax than for each man to go his own way and have no law and order.
- VI. WE ARE TO HONOR OUR LEADERS. We are not to speak disrespectfully of them or bring reproach upon them. We are to pay them honor. This means that it is proper to address the judge, “Your Honor.” It is proper to stand when someone of authority walks in the room.
- VII. WE ARE TO RESPECT THE AUTHORITY OF THE PASTOR. Notice Hebrews 13:7, 17. This is also vitally important. God gives the church the right to choose its pastor. This pastor becomes responsible in a great measure for the souls of his people. The people ought to respect him as such. They are to address him and treat him with respect. They are not to slander him or talk about him wrongly. It is true that they will not always agree with what he does, but he is the leader that God has given them, and he should be respected as such. He is not perfect any more than the mayor, governor, or president, but he does fill an office ordained by God.
- VIII. THE REASON FOR THIS RESPECT AND OBEDIENCE. There is a definite reason why little children are to be taught to obey and respect their parents. There is a definite reason why we are to honor and respect the pastor, governor, law, etc. There is only one perfect ruler, and that ruler is God! If we are taught to respect and honor authority, we will have obedience ingrained in our character. Then when we come face to face with the One Who is the perfect authority, we can more easily respect, honor, and obey the true God through Jesus Christ. When a child respects, honors, and obeys his parents, he is doing it as unto God. Then when he is old enough to understand about God, he will immediately honor Him, for he has been taught to honor and respect authority. This is the reason that anarchy and atheism go hand in hand. Anarchy and rebellion against God are companions.
- IX. JESUS HAD RESPECT FOR AUTHORITY. Our Lord gave us the finest example of being respectful.
1. He respected the law and the paying of taxes. He took a fish and from the fish’s mouth He took a coin. With that coin He paid taxes.
 2. He showed respect for authority. He said in Matthew 22:21, “Render therefore unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar’s; and unto God the things that are God’s.” Here He gave an example for us and admonished us to respect, honor, and obey the temporal law, by rendering unto Cæsar what is his, and God’s law by rendering unto God what is His.
 3. He showed respect for teachers. At the age of twelve He was in the temple. He was the Son of God, and He certainly could have taught His teachers many things. He, however, was just a child at the time, and He wanted to teach us to respect our teachers and those in authority over us. Hence, He simply asked questions. See Luke 2:46. He did not teach. His questions caused them to marvel. He was showing respect.
 4. He showed respect for His parents. Read Luke 2:51. Here is a great example for all children and young people. This was the Son of God. He knew He was the son of God. He at twelve years of age had already asked questions of the doctors and teachers. Now then He returns to Nazareth with his parents, and Luke 2:51 says He “was subject unto them.” (Of course, we understand that Joseph was not His earthly father; he was only His foster father, but even so, Joseph was a man in authority over the Christ-child, and Jesus “was subject unto them.”) Now notice in Luke 2:52 the result of that subjection. Immediately He “increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and

man.” This, of course, is always the case. If a child matures to become what he ought to become, if he has the wisdom, stature, and favor of God and man he ought to have, he must be taught to be subject unto his parents. Jesus gave us the perfect example.

5. He had respect for the “establishment.” He came to fulfill the Old Testament law and ceremony. Even though He was the Son of God, though He had been baptized, though the Holy Spirit had come upon Him, and He had already started His earthly ministry, He still returned to the synagogue. Notice the words in Luke 4:16, “as his custom was.” Though the synagogue would be obsolete, Jesus realized that it was the “establishment.” It was His “custom” to attend.

CONCLUSION: Teachers, stress to the class the importance of respecting authority on every level. Teach that authority has been chosen by proper channels. Someday your pupils will assume places of authority. Impress upon them the fact that if they are to receive the respect they are due in the future, they should give the respect they are supposed to give now.

QUESTIONS:

1. How did Jesus pay taxes?
2. Give an example of Jesus’ being subject to teachers.
3. What were the results of Jesus’ being subject to His parents?
4. Who was the king in Paul’s day?
5. Who should choose those who rule over us?
6. Who should respect and obey them?
7. What should be our attitude toward our pastor?
8. What should be our behavior toward the law?
9. What will God do to us if we will not obey our parents?
10. What has God promised those who will obey their parents?
11. What should be our attitude toward the “establishment”?
12. What is the great reason for obedience and respect for authority?
13. Who is the perfect ruler?