

HOMILY ON OBEDIENCE

Almighty God has created and appointed all things in heaven and on earth and all about, in a most excellent and perfect order. In heaven, he has appointed distinct and several orders and states of Archangels and Angels. On earth he has assigned and appointed Kings, Princes, with other governors under them, in all good and necessary order. The water above is kept, and rains down in due time and season. The sun, moon, stars, rainbow, thunder, lightning, clouds, and all the birds of the air, keep their order. The earth, trees, seeds, plants, herbs, corn, grass, and all manner of beasts keep themselves in order: all the parts of the whole year, as winter, summer, months, nights and days, continue in their order: all kinds of fish in the sea, rivers, and waters, with all fountains, springs and the seas themselves keep their good course and order.

Human beings also have all parts both within and without, like soul, heart, mind, memory, understanding, reason, speech, with all and singular corporal members of our body in a profitable, necessary, and pleasant order: every degree of people in their vocation, calling and office, is appointed to them their duty and order: some are in high degree, some in low, some Kings and Princes, some inferiors and subjects, priests, and layfolk, masters and servants, fathers, and children, husbands and wives, rich and poor, and everyone needs the other, so that in all things God, in good order, is lauded and praised, without which no house, city or commonwealth can continue, endure or last. For where there is no right order, there reigns abuse, carnal liberty, enormity, sin and Babylonian confusion.

Take away Kings Princes, Rulers, Magistrates, Judges, and such estates of God's good order, and no one shall ride or go by the highway un-robbed, no one shall sleep in their own house or bed un-killed, no one shall keep their spouse, children, and possession in quietness, all things shall be in-common, and there must needs follow all kinds of mischief, and utter destruction of souls, bodies, goods and social well being. But blessed be God, that we in this realm of England, feel not the horrible calamities, miseries, and wretchedness, which all they undoubtedly feel and suffer, who lack this godly order: and praised be God, that we know the great excellent benefit of God shown towards us in this behalf, God has sent us his high gift, our most dear Sovereign Lord the King, with a godly, wise and honourable counsel, with other superiors and inferiors, in a beautiful and godly order.

So let us subjects do our bounden duty, giving hearty thanks to God, and praying for the preservation of this godly order. Let us all obey even from the bottom of our hearts, all their godly proceedings, laws, statutes, proclamations, and injunctions, with all other godly orders. Let us consider the Scriptures with the Holy Spirit, which persuade and command us all obediently to be subject, first and chiefly to the King's Majesty, supreme governor over all, and the next to his honourable counsellors, and to all other nobility, magistrates, and officers, who by God's goodness, have been placed and ordered.

For Almighty God is the only author and provider of this state and order, as it is written of God, in the Book of Proverbs: Through me kings reign, through me counsellors make just laws, through me Princes rule, and judges of the earth execute judgement, I am loving to them that love me (Proverbs 8.15, 17).

Here let us mark well, and remember that the high power and authority of Kings, with their making of laws, judgments and offices, which are the ordinances not of mortals, but of God: and this word is many times repeated. Here it is also well to be considered and remembered, that this good order is appointed by God's wisdom, favour, and love, especially for those who love God, and so he says, I love them that love me. Also in the Book of Wisdom we learn that a king's power, authority, and strength, is a great benefit from God, given of his great mercy to comfort us in our great misery. For we read it said to kings, Hear O Kings, and understand, learn you who are Judges of the ends of the earth, listen you who rule the multitudes: for power is given you from the Lord, and strength, from the highest (Wisdom 6.1-3). Let us learn also by the infallible and undeceivable Word of God, that kings and other supreme and higher officers, are ordained of God, who is most high: and so they are here taught diligently to apply and give themselves to knowledge and wisdom, necessary for the ordering of God's people committed to their governance, whom they govern as charged by God.

And they are here also taught by Almighty God, that they should acknowledge themselves to have all their power and strength, not from Rome but immediately from God Most High. We read in the Book of Deuteronomy, that all punishment pertains to God, by this sentence, Vengeance is mine, and I will repay (Deuteronomy 32.35). But this sentence we must understand pertains also to the Magistrates which exercise God's gentleness in judgement, and punishing by good and godly laws, here on earth. And the places of Scripture, which seem to remove from among all christian men, judgement, punishment, or killing, ought to be understood, that no one, on their own authority, may be judge over another, may punish, or may kill. But we must refer all judgement to God, Kings and Rulers, Judges under them, which be God's officers to execute justice, and by plain words of Scripture, have their authority and use of the sword granted by God, as we are taught by Saint Paul, that dear and chosen Apostle of our Saviour Christ, whom we ought diligently to obey, even as we would obey our Saviour Christ, if he were here present.

Saint Paul writes to the Romans, Let every one submit themselves to the authority of higher powers, for there is no power but of God. The powers that are, are ordained of God. Whosoever stands with the power, stands with the ordinances of God: but those who resist or are against it, shall receive damnation. For rulers are not fearful to those who do good, but to those who do evil. Will you be without fear of that power? Do well then, and so shall you be praised of the same, for they are the ministers of God, for your good. But if you do evil, then fear, for they bear not the sword for nothing, for they are the ministers of God, to take vengeance on those that do evil. So you must obey, not only for fear of vengeance, but also, because of conscience, and even for this cause you pay tribute, for they are God's ministers serving for the same purpose (Romans 13.1-6).

Here we learn from Saint Paul, the chosen vessel of God, that everyone, and he excludes no one including Priest, Apostle, or Prophet, as St. Chrysostom says, owe a bounden duty, even in conscience, obedience, submission, and subjection to the high powers, which are set in authority by God. As such they are God's Lieutenants, God's Presidents, God's Officers, God's Commissioners, God's Judges, ordained of God himself, and only from God they have their power and authority. Saint Paul threatens no less pain, than everlasting damnation to disobedient persons, to those who resist against this general and common authority, for as much as they resist, they resist not mortals, but God.

THE SECOND PART OF THE SERMON OF OBEDIENCE.

Not Our Device and Invention, but God's Wisdom, Order, Power and Authority.

God has created and set all things in order. We have been taught in the first part of the Sermon, about good order and obedience. We ought for common good to observe and keep due order, and be obedient to powers, ordinances, and laws, and all rulers that are appointed of God, for good order to be kept in the world: and how the magistrates ought to learn how to rule and govern according to God's Laws: and all subjects are bound to obey them as God's ministers, even if they are evil, not only for fear, but also for conscience sake.

And here, good people, let us all mark diligently, it is not lawful for inferiors and subjects, to resist and stand against superior powers: Saint Paul's words are plain, those who withstand face damnation: for to withstand, is to withstand the ordinance of God. Our Saviour Christ himself, and his Apostles, received many and diverse injuries of the unfaithful and wicked people in authority: and we never read that they caused any sedition or rebellion against those in authority. We read often they patiently suffered all trouble, vexation, slander, pain, and death itself obediently without tumult or resistance. They committed their cause to him who judges righteously, and prayed for their enemies heartily and earnestly. They knew the authority of the powers was God's ordinance, and therefore both in their words and deeds, they taught obedience, and never taught nor did otherwise.

Pilate, the wicked Judge, said to Christ, Do you not know I have power to crucify you, and power to release you? Jesus answered, You could have no power at all, except it was given you from above. So Christ taught us plainly, that even the wicked rulers have their power and authority from God, and therefore it is not lawful for their subjects to stand against them, even if they abuse their power: much less then it is lawful for subjects, to withstand their Godly and Christian Princes, who do not abuse their authority, but use the same to God's Glory, and the profit and comfort of God's people. The Holy Apostle Peter commands servants to be obedient to their masters, not only if they are good and gentle, but also if they are evil and awkward: affirming that the vocation and calling of God's people is to be patient, and long-suffering. And he brings the patience of our Saviour Christ, to persuade obedience to governors, even if they are wicked wrongdoers.

But let us now hear St. Peter himself speak, for his words certify best our conscience. Thus he utters them in his first epistle, 'Slaves, accept the authority of your masters with all deference, not only those who are kind and gentle but also those who are harsh. For it is to

your credit if, being aware of God, you endure pain while suffering unjustly. If you endure when you are beaten for doing wrong, where is the credit in that? But if you endure when you do right and suffer for it, you have God's approval. For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you should follow in his steps.' (1 Peter 2.18-21). All these are the very words of St. Peter.

David also teaches us a good lesson in this way. He was many times cruelly and wrongfully persecuted by Saul, and many times put in jeopardy and danger of his life by Saul and his people, yet he neither withstood, nor used force or violence against Saul his mortal and deadly enemy, but did offer his Lord and Master King Saul, most true, diligent, and faithful service (1 Samuel 18.11, 14, 30, 19.10-11; 20.31; 24.2-7).

Even when the Lord God had given Saul into David's hands in his own cave, he would not hurt him, when he might without any danger easily have slain him. He would not suffer any of his servants once to lay their hand on King Saul, but prayed to God, Lord keep me from doing that thing to my master, the Lord's anointed, keep me that I lay not my hand on him, seeing he is the anointed of the Lord: for as truly as the Lord lives, except the Lord smite him, or except his day come, or that he go down to war, and perish in battle, the Lord be merciful to me, that I lay not my hand upon the Lord's anointed.

David might have killed his enemy Saul, it is evidently proved in the First Book of the Kings, both by the cutting off the lap of Saul's garment, and also by plain confession of Saul. Also another time, as is mentioned in the same book, when the most unmerciful and most unkind King Saul did persecute poore David, God did again give King Saul into David's hands, by casting of King Saul and his whole army into a dead sleep, so that David, and one Abisai with him, came in the night into Saul's host, where Saul lay sleeping, and his spear stake in the ground at his head: then said Abisai to David, God has delivered your enemy into your hand at this time, now therefore let me smite him once with my spear to the earth, and I will not smite him again the second time: meaning thereby to have killed him with one stroke, and to have made him sure for ever. And David answered and said to Abisai, Destroy him not, for who can lay his hands on the Lord's anointed, and be guiltless? And David said furthermore, As sure as the Lord lives, the Lord shall smite him, or his day shall come to die, or he shall descend or go down into battle, and there perish, the Lord keep me from laying my hands on the Lord's anointed. But take the spear that is at his head, and the jar of water, and let us go: and so he did. Here is evidently proved that we may not withstand, nor in any wise hurt an anointed King, which is God's lieutenant, vice-regent, and highest minister in that country where he is King.

An Objection.

Some here would say, that David in his own defence might have killed King Saul lawfully, and with a safe conscience.

An Answer.

David knew he might in no wise withstand, hurt, or kill his Sovereign Lord and King: he knew that he was King Saul's subject, though he was in great favor with God, and his enemy Saul out of God's favor. Therefore though he was much provoked, yet he refused utterly to hurt

the Lord's anointed. He did not offend God and his own conscience, though he had occasion and opportunity, once laying his hands upon God's officer the king, for sake of his office.

So he prayed earnestly, that he not lay his hands on the Lord's anointed. And by these two examples, David, being named in Scripture a man after God's own heart, gives a general rule and lesson to all subjects in the world, not to withstand their Lord and King, not to take a sword by their private authority against their King, God's anointed (1 Samuel 26.11; Psalm.88.), who only bears the sword by God's authority for the maintenance of the good, and the punishment of the evil, who only by God's Law has the use of the sword at his command, and also has all power, jurisdiction, regiment, correction and punishment, as supreme governor of all his Realms and Dominions, and that even by the authority of God, and by God's ordinances.

Yet another notable story and doctrine is in the Second Book of Kings, that makes also for this purpose. When an Amalekite, by King Saul's own consent and commandment, had killed King Saul (2 Samuel 1.8-10), he went to David, supposing to have had great thanks for his message that he had killed David's deadly enemy, and therefore he made great haste to tell to David the news, bringing with him King Saul's crown that was on his head, and his bracelet that was on his arm, as evidence his news was true. But godly David was so far from rejoicing at this news, immediately and forthwith he rent the clothes off his back, he mourned and wept, and said to the messenger, How is it that you were not afraid to lay your hands on the Lord's anointed and destroy him? And so David made one of his servants kill the messenger, saying, Your blood be on your own head, for your own mouth has testified and witnessed against you, granting that you have slain the Lord's anointed.

These examples being so many and clear, it is an intolerable ignorance, madness, and wickedness for subjects to make any murmuring, rebellion, resistance, or withstanding, commotion, or insurrection against their most dear and most dread Sovereign Lord and King, ordained and appointed of God's goodness for their comfort, peace, and quietness.

Let us believe undoubtedly, good Christian people, that we may not obey Kings, Magistrates, or any other, even if they are our own fathers, if they command us to do anything contrary to God's commandments. In such a case we ought to say with the Apostle, we must obey God rather than you (Acts 5.29). Even then, we may not stand violently, or rebel against rulers, or make insurrection sedition, or tumults, either by force of arms, or other means, against the anointed of the Lord, or their officers. We must in such cases patiently suffer wrongs and injuries, referring the judgement of our cause only to God (Acts 7).

Let us fear the terrible punishment of Almighty God against traitors and rebellious persons. By the example of Chore, Dathan, and Abiron, who worked against God's Magistrates and officers, and the earth opened up and swallowed them alive. Others for their wicked murmuring and rebellion, were by a sudden fire sent of God, utterly consumed. Others for their misbehaviour to their rulers and governors, God's ministers, were suddenly stricken with a leprosy. Still others experienced plague, so that fourteen thousand and seven hundred were killed in one day, for rebellion against those whom God had appointed to be in

authority. Absalon, also rebelling against his father King David, was punished with a strange and notable death (2 Samuel 18.9-10).

THE THIRD PART OF THE SERMON OF OBEDIENCE.

You have heard so far in this Sermon about good order and obedience, manifestly proved both by the Scriptures and examples, that all subjects are bound to obey the magistrates, and for no cause to resist, or stand against, or rebel, or make any sedition against them, even if they are wicked. And let no one think that they can escape unpunished, who commits treason, conspiracy, or rebellion against our sovereign Lord the King, though they commit the same ever so secretly, either in thought, word, or deed, not even privately, in a private room by oneself, or openly communicating, and consulting with others. For treason will not be hid, treason will out at length. God will have that most detestable vice both opened and punished, for that it is so directly against his ordinance, and against his high principal judged and anointed on earth. The violence and injury that is committed against authority, is committed against God and the common good of the whole realm, which God will have known and condemned or worthily punished one way or another. For it is notably written of the wise in Scripture, in the Book called Ecclesiastes: With the King no evil in your thought or speech, no hurt of him in private: for the birds of the air shall betray your voice, and her feathers will betray your words (Ecclesiastes 10.20). These lessons and examples are written for our learning.

So let us all fear the most detestable vice of rebellion, ever knowing and remembering, that those who resist or withstand common authority, resist or withstand God and his ordinances, as it may be proved by many other places of Holy Scripture. And here let us take heed that we understand not these or such other like places (which command obedience to superiors, and so punish rebellion and disobedience to the same) to be meant, in any way, of the pretence or imagined power of the Bishop of Rome. For truly the Scripture of God allows no such usurped power, full of enormities, abusions, and blasphemies. But the true meaning of these and such places, is to extol and set forth God's true ordinance, and the authority of God's anointed Kings, and of their officers appointed under them. And concerning the usurped power of the Bishop of Rome, which he most wrongfully challenges, as the successor of Christ and Peter: we may easily perceive how false, feigned, and forged it is, not only in that it has no sufficient ground in Holy Scripture, but also by the fruits and doctrine thereof.

For our Saviour Christ, and St. Peter, teach most earnestly and agreeably obedience to Kings, as to the chief and supreme rulers in this world, next under God: but the Bishop of Rome teaches that they that are under him, and are free from all burdens and charges of the common good, and obedience toward their Prince, most clearly against Christ's doctrine and St. Peter's. He should be called Antichrist, and the successor of the Scribes and Pharisees, rather than Christ's Vicar, successor of St. Peter: seeing that not only in this point, but also in other weighty matters of Christian religion, in matters of remission and forgiveness of sins, and of salvation, he teaches so directly against both St. Peter, and against our Saviour Christ, who not only taught obedience to Kings, but also practised obedience in their conversation and living: For we read that they both paid tribute to the king (Matthew 17.27):

And also we read that the Holy Virgin Mary, mother to our Saviour Christ, and Joseph, who was taken for his father, at the Emperor's commandment, went to the city of David, named Bethlehem, to be taxed among other, and to declare their obedience to the magistrates, for God's ordinances sake (Luke 2.4-5). And here let us not forget the Blessed Virgin Mary's obedience: for although she was highly in God's favor, and Christ's natural mother, and was also great with child at the same time, and near to labour, that she was delivered on her journey, yet she gladly without any excuse or grudging (for conscience sake) did take the cold and foul winter journey, being in the mean season so poor, that she lay in a stable, and there she gave birth to Christ.

And in the same way, St. Peter agrees, writing by express words in his First Epistle: Submit yourselves, and be subject to Kings, as to the chief heads, and to rulers, as to them that are sent of him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well, for this is the will of God (1 Peter 2.13-15). I need not to expound these words, they are plain enough. St. Peter does not say, Submit yourselves to me, as supreme head of the Church: neither says he, Submit yourselves from time to time to my successors in Rome: but he say, Submit yourselves to your King, your supreme head, and to those that he appoints in authority under him, for that you shall so show your obedience, it is the will of God. God will that you be in subjection to your Leader the King.

This is God's ordinance, God's commandment, and God's holy will, that the whole body of every Realm, and all the members and parts of the same, shall be subject to their head, their King, and as St. Peter writes, for the Lord's sake (1 Peter 2.13): and as St. Paul writes for conscience sake, and not for fear alone (Romans 13.5). Thus we learn by the Word of God, to yield to our King, that is due to our King: that is, honour, obedience, payments of due tax, customs, tributes, subsidies, love and fear (Matthew 22.21, Romans 13).

So we know partly our bounden duty to common authority, now let us learn to accomplish this. And let us most instantly and heartily pray to God, the only author of all authority, for all them that are in authority, as St. Paul wills, writing to Timothy in his First Epistle: I exhort you therefore, above all things, prayers, supplications, intercessions, and giving of thanks be done for all men: for Kings, and for all in authority, that we may live a quiet and a peaceable life, with all godliness and honesty: for that is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour (1 Timothy 2.1-3). Here St. Paul makes an earnest and particular exhortation, concerning giving thanks, and prayer for Kings and rulers, saying, Above all things, as he might say, principally and chiefly, let prayer be made for Kings.

Let us heartily thank God for his great and excellent benefit and providence concerning the state of Kings. Let us pray for them, that they may have God's favour and God's protection. Let us pray that they may ever in all things have God before their eyes. Let us pray, that they may have wisdom, strength, justice, clemency, and zeal for God's glory, for God's truth, for Christian souls, and for the commonwealth. Let us pray, that they may rightly use their sword and authority, for the maintenance and defence of the Catholic faith contained in Holy Scripture, and of their good and honest subjects, for the fear and punishment of the evil and vicious people. Let us pray that they may most faithfully follow the Kings and Captains in the Bible, David, Ezekiel, Josias, and Moses, with such others.

And let us pray for ourselves, that we may be godly in living and holy and Christian conversation: so shall we have God on our side, and then let us not fear what people can do against us: so we shall live in true obedience, both to our most merciful King in heaven, and to our most Christian King on Earth: so shall we please God and have the exceeding benefit, peace of conscience, rest and quietness here in this world, and after this life, we shall enjoy a better life, rest, peace, and the everlasting bliss of heaven, which he grants us all, for him who was obedient for us all, even to death on the cross, Jesus Christ: to whom with the Father and the Holy Spirit, be all honour and glory, both now and ever. **Amen.**