

# Nation under God

## Week 2: When Authority Goes Bad

**Weekly Summary:** There are times when a Christian should stand up against authorities. That's what the three men in the fiery furnace had to do when their king told them to disobey God. Yet even as they stood up against their king's wicked decree, they continued to show him honor and respect. In the same way God calls us to stand against injustice without sacrificing respect for those in positions of earthly authority over us.



### Saul

**1 Samuel 24:5-6** – Afterward, David was conscience-stricken for having cut off a corner of his robe. <sup>6</sup>He said to his men, “The Lord forbid that I should do such a thing to my master, the Lord’s anointed, or lay my hand on him; for he is the anointed of the Lord.”

### Nebuchadnezzar

**Daniel 3:1a, 6** – King Nebuchadnezzar made an image of gold, sixty cubits high and six cubits wide ... “Whoever does not fall down and worship will immediately be thrown into a blazing furnace.”

**Daniel 3:16-18** – Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to him, “King Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. <sup>17</sup>If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to deliver us from it, and he will deliver us from Your Majesty’s hand. <sup>18</sup>But even if he does not, we want you to know, Your Majesty, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up.”



### Ananias the High Priest

**Acts 23:1-3** – Paul looked straight at the Sanhedrin and said, “My brothers, I have fulfilled my duty to God in all good conscience to this day.” <sup>2</sup>At this the high priest Ananias ordered those standing near Paul to strike him on the mouth. <sup>3</sup>Then Paul said to him, “God will strike you, you whitewashed wall! You sit there to judge me according to the law, yet you yourself violate the law by commanding that I be struck!”

**Acts 23:4-5** – Those who were standing near Paul said, “How dare you insult God’s high priest!” <sup>5</sup>Paul replied, “Brothers, I did not realize that he was the high priest; for it is written: ‘Do not speak evil about the ruler of your people.’”

## Emperor Nero

**1 Peter 2:13-15** – 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.

**Romans 12:14, 17-21** – Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. ... <sup>17</sup>Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. <sup>18</sup>If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. <sup>19</sup>Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. <sup>20</sup>On the contrary: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head." <sup>21</sup>Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.



➤ Christians \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.



David



3 Men



Paul



Peter

➤ Christians who \_\_\_\_\_ grace will \_\_\_\_\_ grace.

**1 Peter 2:20-24** – 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. <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.



## Digging Deeper

1. Over the centuries, many persecutors and enemies of Christianity have become Christians themselves. Why do you think that is? How does 1 Peter 2:12 connect to your answer?
2. Over the centuries, many persecutors and enemies of Christianity have never become Christians. Does this affect the way you treat anti-Christian authority? Why or why not?
3. How do you typically behave when you feel wronged by those in authority over you? How would the people in today's Bible stories behave if they were in your circumstances?
4. Why do we have such a hard time when it comes to honoring and respecting authority—especially when it comes to our government? What does that reveal about the natural motivations of our hearts?
5. Who are you in authority over? What are some of the ways that we ourselves can misuse our authority? What does this remind you that we all so badly need in life—both from God and from those subject to our authority?
6. What injustices might you need to speak up against this week? What are the goals and motivations in doing so?
7. What love might you need to show unjust authority this week? How will you show that love?
8. **Homework:** Read Ephesians 1:17-23 to start thinking ahead to next week's message!
9. **Challenge:** Apologize to an authority (teacher, parent, boss, etc.) you dishonored and disrespected in the past.