



Proverbs 29:2

(2) When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice;
But when a wicked *man* rules, the people groan.

Proverbs 16:2

(2) All the ways of a man *are* pure in his own eyes,
But the LORD weighs the spirits.

New King James Version

What if a ruler, the one to whom we are to submit, is an oppressive person? What if he is just incompetent or stupid, and we know better how to do the job he should be doing? What if the person is sexually immoral or financially greedy? Does [God](#) still want us to submit? What protection do we have in these kinds of circumstances?

Abomination that it is, those in authority often do evil. They might have serious character flaws that catch their victims in the effects of their flaws. What is so maddening is that they justify their ways—seeing them as good—and they will turn around and blame the innocent for the evils that occur.

For example, the proverb says that "all the ways of a man are pure in his own eyes." The incompetent man does not think to himself, "I'm really dumb, stupid, idiotic, and shouldn't even have this job." The sexually immoral person does not see himself as perverse. Many prostitutes will say, "Yes, I'm doing wrong according to the law, but I am providing a needed and wanted service. If it weren't, I would have no customers." They justify themselves; they are pure in their own eyes.

Consider the enemies of [Jesus](#). They felt justified in taking His life because He was stirring up the people. No one on earth has ever been more innocent, yet they justified what they were doing because the people were being stirred up by Him. They accused Him of being a revolutionary, a threat to community stability.

If we are in a position like this—under an oppressive ruler who justifies the way he is doing things, and we are suffering the effects of his actions—we feel like powerless pawns being taken advantage of. We feel he is denying us the liberty to do what we want. Should we submit or rebel?

To know what to do, we must look at what Jesus did in a similar circumstance. This is not an occasion in which the authority figure demands submission, and in submitting, we must break the [law of God](#). The situation does not involve being forced to [sin](#) but simply submitting to one who is unreasonable and oppressive.

[John 19:10](#) is part of Jesus' trial for His life before Pilate, and occurs *after* Pilate had ordered Him to be scourged: "Then Pilate said to Him, 'Are You not speaking to me? Do You not know that I have power to crucify You, and power to release You?'" He could choose to do either. Pilate was a corrupt official. His record, according to secular history, was not at all good. The Jews despised him for his harsh ways.

"Jesus answered, 'You could have no power at all against Me unless it had been given you from above. Therefore the one who delivered Me to you has the greater sin'" ([John 19:11](#)). His response is very meaningful. It reveals His attitude, His approach, to every circumstance of His life.

To be in the same frame of mind, we must ask ourselves, "[Do we see God](#)?" Is He really a part of our lives? Is He really running this creation? Is He really sitting at the controls of things? Is He really aware of us as individuals? Does He have every hair on our heads numbered? Are we really the apple of His eye? Are our lives really in His hands? Have we really given them to Him, or are we holding part of ourselves in reserve?

"You could have no power at all against Me *unless it had been given you from above.*" Jesus saw life clearly and simply: God was in complete control of everything going on in the universe. Not that everything was being directed by Him in the sense that He was causing it to occur, but that Jesus believed with every fiber of His being that God was with Him all the time, everywhere, and at every moment. He knew His life was in His Father's hands, and Pilate could do nothing against Him unless God allowed it.

Would God have us submit to somebody who was cruel, hard-hearted, incompetent, sexually unbalanced, perverted, stupid, or financially greedy? Would He have us live and work under such a person? He put His own Son in that position! Everything at Jesus' trial and crucifixion looked totally stacked against Him. Carnally, it seems as if He had every right to rebel. He could have replied, "Do you not know to whom you are doing this?" Instead, He says, in paraphrase, "You would not have the power to do anything except that My Father passed on this. And He is now looking at Me to see how I am going to respond. Will I submit to the authority that He has permitted to be over Me right now?"

Do we see God in our lives like this? We have to look at ourselves differently than the way people in [the world](#) look at themselves. We must decide whether or not we are in God's hand. Do we have the [faith](#) to trust that we are in His hand and that the constituted authorities are also in His hand? Do we believe He is aware of what is happening and that He deeply cares about what we will do in each situation? As He did with Abraham, He must know what kind of witness we will make (see Genesis 22).

— John W. Ritenbaugh

To learn more, see:
[Submitting \(Part 1\)](#)



Related Topics:

[Apple of God's Eye](#)

[Authority, Submission to](#)

[God's Control](#)

[God's Intervention](#)

[God's Involvement](#)

[God's Sovereignty](#)

[Honor the King](#)

[Pontius Pilate](#)

[Prostitutes](#)

[Self Justification](#)

[Sovereignty of God](#)

[Submission to Authority](#)

[Submitting](#)

[Submitting to Authority](#)

[Witness, Quality of](#)