

[John 19:10-11](#)

(10) Then saith Pilate unto him, Speakest thou not unto me? knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee? (11) Jesus answered, Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above: therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin.

King James Version

History shows that the primary enemies of the church arise from humans influenced by [Satan](#) and his demons - and history continually repeats itself. The clearest examples of where these enemies lie are shown in the lives and ministries of [Jesus Christ](#) and the apostles. Did not the established religious and governmental leaders of their day, such as Caiaphas, the Pharisees and Sadducees, Pilate, the Herods, etc., willingly cooperate in persecuting them?

Searching into God's authority over these enemies will help us to see how complete and all-encompassing is His power over everything. Past events show that civil governments and false churches are always the true church's most dangerous adversaries.

Here, "power" refers to civil authority, and Jesus informs us that Pilate, a powerful Roman governor of Judea, who had authority over life and death, derived his authority from [God](#). The authority would not be his if God had not given it to him directly. We can infer that Pilate was specifically given his particular civil authority. Why is this important for us to know and believe?

[Proverbs 21:1](#) adds an important truth: "The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, like the rivers of water; He turns it wherever He wishes." *The Living*

Bible paraphrases this as, "Just as water is turned into irrigation ditches, so the Lord directs the king's thoughts, He turns them wherever He wants to."

This fact helps us understand God's sovereignty and much of history too. If the thoughts of a king - representing the highest, most influential, and most powerful person in the nation - are in God's hand, and He has the power to influence his decisions toward the outcome that pleases Him, are not all human governors completely under the Almighty's sovereign control? Clearly, God has the power to move all history in the direction He wishes it to go. His desire will always be done. [Romans 13:1-2](#) makes this deduction certain:

Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves.

Not only does God have the power to move those already in office, but He appointed them in the first place! Since Paul writes this directly to Christians, and Christians have lived throughout history and in virtually every place on earth, the wording suggests that this command has timeless, universal application. Thus, God reveals that, in the final analysis, all civil magistrates, from the emperor on down to the lower authorities - and religious authorities as well - owe to God their appointments and rights to govern.

However, when it comes to a question of obeying the laws of God or the instructions of men which are contrary to those laws, then we must *always* obey God ([Acts 5:29](#)). Then we must be ready to pay the consequences for our actions in [faith](#), always looking to God even when unfairly paying for it in ways like losing our jobs, our freedom, or even our lives.

In [John 5:17](#), Jesus provides insight into God's activity throughout the millennia of this creation: "Jesus answered them, 'My Father has been working until now, and I have been working.'" God's labors are the continuous managing and ruling over the affairs of men. He has not gone "way off somewhere," but is actively involved in bringing His purpose to

pass at all times. By His will and in His providence, authorities are appointed to maintain order, to encourage good conduct, and to punish wrongdoing.

Thus, anyone who believes God is confronted by a matter of biblical truth and clear logic. How will any of our enemies "get around," deflect, or nullify the real unseen Power who stands behind and above the visible powers that be? His will *will* stand. So, to whom do we turn in time of need?

— John W. Ritenbaugh

To learn more, see:

[Power Belongs to God \(Part Two\)](#)

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