

Teaching Sound Doctrine Lessons on Clearing The Confusion

The Need for Authority

To have authority for what we do means that we have freedom, the right and permission to act as it comes from one who has the right to order and give permission. Our authority is Jesus Christ. He has the right to order and command. (Matt. 28:18)"And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth."

God has the right to tell us what to do by virtue of the fact that he is our Creator *Gen. 1:1,26,27 And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.*

Now lets look at *Act 17:24-31 God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us: For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring. Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device. And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.*

When man tries to become his own authority, he is acting according to the same evil desires with which Satan tempted Eve. Concerning the forbidden fruit, the serpent said, (*Gen. 3:5*)"For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes

will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil". Satan was telling Adam and Eve that they could become their own authority (i.e., their own gods). They did not need Jehovah telling them what to do. They could decide for themselves what is right and wrong. This is the message of secular humanism. It is born out of the concept that the highest authority is man; we don't need any Deity to tell us what to do. Such is a denial of the authority that God inherently has because he is our Creator. The foundation for the teaching of authority is rooted in Genesis. In order for us to fully understand the need for authority, we must first understand God as our Maker.

Authority is necessary in all aspects of life. Without it, there can only be anarchy and chaos. Without authority in the home, it will fall apart just look at the fatherless families and broken homes today. Without authority in school, there will only be problems look at the condition of the public school system in your own town. Imagine what it would be like without authority in the workplace. Some may like the idea of having no boss, but unless someone acts with authority, it will be impossible for the business to flourish. Without authority in the nation and government, many citizens will act wickedly with no judgment on their actions you can clearly see this today all across our country. Authority is needed everywhere. This is something that most people should recognize. No group, organization or nation can function smoothly without someone who can "call the shots."

The Need for Authority in Religious Matters

The need for authority is seen especially in the religious world. The existence of hundreds of denominations show this. The many divisions that exist, even among God's people, testify of the need for authority. Divisions and denominations exist because people, at sometime, did not listen and submit to the authority of God. Instead, they became their own authority and acted in lawlessness.

The nature of man requires authority. Man simply cannot provide this authority by himself. Jeremiah said, *"O Lord, I know the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man who walks to direct his own steps"* (Jer. 10:23) (Prov. 14:12) *There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death..* When man begins to act on his own authority, then he is trying to do what cannot be rightly done. Some deny that we need authority for all that we do and teach. But if this be the case, would someone explain the grounds for such a position? When people act or teach something without God's authority, then they must look to one of two things: (1) themselves as the authority, or (2) other men as the authority. Yet, the Bible condemns looking to men as the

source of authority again look at (Jer. 10:23) also Col. 2:20,22 *Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances, (Touch not; taste not; handle not; Which all are to perish with the using;) after the commandments and doctrines of men?* Matt. 15:9 tells us *But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.* Now go look up Rom. 12:3; and 1 Cor. 4:6). A position which states that we do not need authority is an unbiblical and sinful position. Without God's authority, we only have man's and man's authority is worthless without God.

The position of humanism is that we do not need God to tell us what to do. We must look to humanity as the highest source of authority. But there is a fatal flaw in this position. If what one man or group says can be the source of authority, then what another man or group says can also be a source of authority, even if what they say contradicts what others say. If one person can appeal to himself or another man as authority, then why can't another person do the same? Who is to say who is right or wrong? When men contradict each other, how will the issues and questions be settled? Where else can we appeal?

Without God, confusion and every evil thing will exist in society. We are seeing this first hand in the world today. The same principle applies to religious matters. When those who claim to believe in God tell us that we do not need authority for a particular belief or practice, they are unwittingly taking the position of humanism. Only division and evil will result. There is no way for us to be united based on the authority of man.

Sadly, this attitude has invaded the Lord's people. The various and sundry divisions among Christians are the result of a failure to submit to God's authority. Instead of recognizing that we must have authority for all we do and teach, some are insisting that the pleas for authority are legalistic and unnecessary. "The church must change with the times," we hear. Such attitudes are nothing short of a total rejection of the authority of God's Word. It is also an outright rejection of Jesus Christ, who claimed to have all authority (Matt. 28:18 *And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.*) Also (Jn. 12:48 *He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.*)

A standard of right and wrong is essential to mankind. The only way that truth and error can be distinguished is by having an objective Standard by which all else is to be judged. This Standard is the Bible, God's inspired Word (2 Tim. 3:16,17) *All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for*

doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.

Without the Bible, we cannot know God's will. We can only act according to our own will, which will ultimately bring destruction refer back to (Prov. 14:12). This is why it is vital for us to plea for "book, chapter and verse" for what we do. "If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God" (1 Pet. 4:11) *If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.*

You can mock it if they want to, but a firm grounding in and heeding of the Book is the only acceptable starting point for doing God's will (1 Cor. 2:9,13) *But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual.* Unless God has revealed something to us in his word, there is no way that we can say we are doing God's will. There is no way that we can act with authority, unless God has, in some way, revealed it in the Scriptures.

An Insightful Question

The Pharisees recognized the need for authority when they asked Jesus about his teaching and works: "By what authority are you doing these things? And who gave you this authority?" (Matt. 21:23) Jesus did not shout them down or tell them they were wrong for asking. He nowhere said, "Why, we don't need authority. You're just being legalistic!" His response was to ask them about the authority for the baptism of John: "Where was it from? From heaven or from men?" (v. 25) This response gives even more support to the fact that we need authority. Why would Jesus ask about it if it wasn't necessary? Jesus fully recognized that authority for practices and teachings is necessary. This question also reveals the only two sources from which a practice or teaching can come: heaven (God) or men. If not from heaven, then a teaching must come from men. Teachings that come from men result in vain service to God (Matt. 15:9) *But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.*

So again we see, only God is the proper source for authority. For authority to be worth anything, it must come from One who has the power to grant it. Men simply do not have this power.

Illustrated in the Old Testament

Many examples given to us in the Old Testament testify to the need for acting with authority (cf. Rom. 15:4). The account of Cain and Abel shows us what it means to act by faith. Abel acted by faith, which means that he must have heard God's Word and obeyed it (Heb. 11:4; Rom. 10:17). Cain acted presumptuously and substituted his own will. He was rejected for this.

Nadab and Abihu were condemned to death because they did not act according to the authority of God (Lev. 10:1,2). They used a strange fire which the Lord "had not commanded them" (v. 1). Perhaps they thought that they did not need authority. Maybe they thought, "But God didn't say not to." Even if they had good intentions, the fact remains that they acted presumptuously, without authority, and were judged for it.

Uzziah acted without authority when he went into the temple and tried to burn incense (2 Chron. 26:16-20). This work was only for the priests (Exod. 20:11-13). Uzziah was told, "It is not for you, Uzziah, to burn incense to the Lord, but for the priests" (v. 18). It was a good work, ordained by God, but it was for a specific group of people. We need to remember this principle when thinking about the work of the church and the work of individuals. There are things that individuals may do that are not given to the church to do as a collective body. Some things "are not for the church" to do "as a church" (cf. 1 Cor. 11:18ff). The point is that Uzziah acted without authority and was punished for it. We need to be careful not to do the same.

It is interesting to hear some fuss about using examples like these to demonstrate our need for authority. "Not that old Noah argument again. Why, that's the Old Testament; we're tired of hearing those old arguments." Are they telling us that they don't like to hear examples from God's Word? Are they admitting that they don't believe that the Bible is really a good example for us to follow? Are they saying that what was written before is not profitable for us? Friends, if you're going to accept the Bible at all, then listen to it! If you don't want to listen to it, then quit pretending to respect the Word of God. At the heart of this issue is the way we look at the Bible. Either we will accept it for what it is, or we will reject it to do what we want.

The New Testament

Ever since the early to mid 1980's liberals have pushed the so called "new hermeneutic," which insists on following Jesus as we think he might have acted or taught. But if we want to know how he would act or teach, then we need to read the Scriptures to see how he acted and what he really taught. He would not do anything today that is inconsistent with his actions and teachings in the first century. His words, which are ever relevant, are just as true today as they were then (Matt. 24:35) *Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.*

Jesus taught in Matthew 7:21,23: *"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.'*

If I had no other Scriptures telling me of the importance of acting with authority (i.e., within the bounds of his revealed will), this one would be sufficient to show why I need it and what happens when people don't have it. First, Jesus is Lord, which again stresses the fact that he has the right to tell us what to do. Acting without authority is an assault on his leadership. We need authority because he is the Lord and he has all authority. Second, acting without authority (i.e., "lawlessness") results in eternal condemnation. People may claim many wonderful works in the name of Jesus, but if these works are not done according to the will of God, they will be lawless and sinful (1 Jn. 3:4) *Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law.* Jesus unequivocally taught the necessity for acting with authority. He also taught the penalty for acting without authority. Let those of the "new hermeneutic" persuasion grapple with that, for it comes from the One who changes not (Heb. 13:8) *Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.*

The apostles likewise taught the need for acting with authority from God. For example, the apostasy is thus born out of a lack of respect for divine authority. Name any unscriptural division that has taken place, and the roots can be traced to a lack of respect for the authority of God and his word.

We are to the endeavor for unity (Eph. 4:16; 1 Cor. 1:10). The only way for unity to be maintained is through respect for God's authority. We must all recognize the same Standard and abide by it (Phil. 3:16). True disciples of Jesus abide in his word (Jn. 8:31,32). We must remain within the confines of the revealed Word of God (cf. 1 Cor. 4:6). To go beyond the Scriptures is to manifest

disrespect for our Lord and bring destruction (2 Jn. 9; cf. Rev. 22:18,19). This is the consistent teaching of the New Testament.

Conclusion

"And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him" (Col. 3:17). If we are to do all in the name of Jesus (i.e., by his authority), then we are to have his sanction for everything that we do and teach. The body (church) is to be the subject to Christ, the head, in everything (Eph.5:24). Without question, then, the Scriptures teach the need for acting with authority in all that we do and teach. This is the only position consistent with Scripture. It is the only position that will bring honor and glory to our Authority and Creator. Therefore, let us never deride fervent appeals to the Bible. Let us never complain at a "thus saith the Lord." Let us not mock "book, chapter and verse" preaching. Instead, let us bring honor and glory to God by full submission to his will. Remember who God is (creator), and remember who we are (the /created). And remember: Christ is the "author of eternal salvation to all who obey him" (Heb. 5:9).