

# Authority in the Scriptures - Part 1

by Colin Anderson

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of recognizing and submitting to divine authority in order to experience true freedom, happiness, and holiness.*

**Duration:** 43:46

**Scripture:** Genesis 2:17, Joshua 1:8, Romans 5:6-8, Hebrews 13:7

**Topics:** "Authority"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the importance of authority and obedience in the Bible. He starts by referencing Hebrews 13:7, which encourages believers to obey and submit to their leaders. The speaker then takes the audience on a journey through various books of the Bible, starting with Genesis, to highlight the theme of authority and obedience. He emphasizes that obedience to God's commandments leads to true holiness and deliverance in our lives. The sermon also touches on the consequences of rebellion and the importance of meditating on God's word for success.

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## Transcript

Times change, and all the word power appears, and we associate power with strength and might. But sometimes the word power in the King James has not so much the force of strength or might, but rather of authority, and it is important for us to gain that distinction. Matthew chapter 8 and verse number 5. And when Jesus was entered into Capernaum, there came unto him a centurion beseeching him, and saying, Lord, my servant lies at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented.

And Jesus said unto him, I will come and heal him. The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that thou should come under my roof, but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed. For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me.

I say to this man, go, and he goeth, and to another come, and he cometh. And to my servant do this, and he doeth it. When Jesus heard this, he marveled and said to them that followed, truly I say to you, I have not found so great faith.

No, not in Israel. He recognized the authority of the Lord Jesus. In his own sphere, this centurion knew what it was to be under authority, and because he himself was under authority, he could express authority, and he could speak with authority, and he could expect obedience.

And that when obedience, Pilate therefore said to Jesus, you do not speak to me. Do you not know that I have authority to release you, and I have authority to crucify you? Jesus answered, you would have no authority over me, unless it had been given you from above. For this reason, he who delivered me up to you, had the greater sin.

You would have no authority over me, unless it had been given to you from above. Romans chapter 13 please, reading from verse 1. Let every person be in subjection to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except from God. I take it that all true authority derives from God himself, who is the absolute authority, and any real, genuine authority owes its origin and its power, its strength to God himself.

For there is no authority except from God, and those which are which exist are established by God. Therefore he who resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God, and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves. For rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil.

Do you want to have no fear of authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise of the same. For it is the minister of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid, for it does not bear the sword for nothing.

For it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath upon the one who practices evil. Therefore it is necessary to be in subjection, not only because of wrath, but also for conscience sake. That is not only because you will be punished by the authority if you do not submit.

That's not the only reason you should submit. You have a conscience which has to be in communion with God. Your spirit has to be communion with God.

Your spirit cannot be in communion with God if your conscience is defiled. It is necessary to be in subjection, not only because of wrath, but also for conscience sake. For because of this you also pay taxes.

For rulers are servants of God, devoting themselves to this very thing. Render to all what is due to them. There was some very cruel exaction of taxes in the day in which Paul wrote these words, but he says, render to all what is due to them.

Tax to whom tax is due, custom to whom custom, fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour. Now the following case histories are not the exact stories of any individual, but they are plucked from my own experience from meeting and talking with people, Christian people. Harry Brownlow bought five tyres on a special deal last year.

Then he sold the odd one, the spare, to a neighbour. As a self-employed travelling salesman he claimed the total purchase on his income tax return. It was such a small evasion that he hardly gave it a second thought.

He saw himself as cheating a corrupt government who would misuse his money anyway. He had forgotten Proverbs 14 and 2 which reads, he who walks in his uprightness fears the Lord, but he who is crooked in his ways despises him. In fiddling with those small figures he revealed that he despised a divinely established authority, and therefore was despising God.

Mrs Penman was deeply distressed over the family's debts. She tried to change her husband's wrong decisions by arguing with him, and when this failed she decided that she must go out to work to help

overcome their problem. She knew that George didn't want her to do this, but she rationalized there's no other way out.

While she prayed earnestly for God's help, she flew right in the face of an authority that God had established over her, but didn't recognize it. Jerry Ernest wanted to spend a year and a half serving in southern Italy with missions unlimited. His elders did not encourage him.

He tried to convince them that he had recently had a transforming experience as a result of attending some spiritual uplift meetings. Then the Lord too had given him a verse, he said in his daily reading. It was Acts 23 11.

So must thou also bear witness at Rome. Deeply impressed that this was the word of the Lord to him, he kept plaguing his elders that they might let him go. They remained unmoved.

MU was breathing down his neck. They wanted to know whether a decision had been reached. Jerry went through the MU crash training course on his own money, and when he had finished the course at his own expense, he had convinced the MU people that he was in a fit spiritual spiritual state, and he went out to Spain or to Italy.

He's home now. Things did not go as well as he'd expected on the field, but he has successfully covered that up. When he gives reports of his work, he does not tell of the frustrations that he faced and the difficulties, but rather he tells mostly of sweet souls that were won and the work that he believes was established.

But it's doubly hard now for Jerry to work with his brethren. They seem awfully suspicious of him, and he wonders why. He forgot a verse, Hebrews 13 and 7, which says, obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those that must give account.

Now I want you to do a little bible study with me. I want you to begin in Genesis, and we're going to go right through the bible. Of course we won't have time to read all the scriptures, but we're going to read a selection of scriptures, beginning in Genesis, and we're going to look at the whole subject of authority, and try to lay a foundation this morning for what we want to share with you during these days.

Chapter 2 of Genesis, and verse 17. And the first statement I wish to make, if you are taking notes, and I would like you to put this down if you are, and the statement is this, and I want you to prove it and hold it fast if it's good, reject it if it isn't. Man can only enjoy what God has for him while he is submissive to divine authority.

May I say that again? Man can only enjoy what God has for him while he is submissive to divine authority. Genesis chapter 2 and verse 17. But from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, now there is authority, for in the day that you eat from it you shall surely die.

Now there's a sanction attached to the word of authority. This word must be obeyed. Man's happiness in this condition, in innocence, in the garden, depends on his obedience to that authority.

Now Eve rationalized, and I'm not blaming the ladies when I talk about Eve, it's a fact of history. Eve rationalized and blew it. Chapter 3 and verse 6. When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that was true, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that was true, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, and in a sense that too was true, only partly true of course.

She took from its fruit and ate, and she gave also to her husband with her and he ate. Now that's very relevant to your experience today, and that's why God has put it in his word. 2nd Corinthians chapter 10, you don't need to turn to it because you'll be going through exodus in a moment, and I know I don't want your fingers to get tired.

2nd Corinthians chapter 10, let me read this to you. Paul says we are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we're taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ. That is, Paul saw his ministry as being a ministry that was bringing the thoughts of men.

This was one way of looking at it. This is the way he expressed it in this context. His ministry was a ministry bringing the thoughts of men into captivity to the obedience of Christ, and that's the ministry of every true servant of God.

Now I know this verse is often personally applied. That is, as if we were to bring our own thoughts into captivity, and in a sense that is true, but it's only an application. It seems to me that the interpretation of this verse is that Paul saw his ministry as reversing the rebellion that was expressed by Eve in the garden.

He saw his ministry as bringing men and women back into captivity, not to bondage, but bringing their thoughts back into captivity to the obedience of Christ, being submissive as he himself, when he was here, was submissive. Now just turn over to chapter 11, or at least I will. Verse 2, For I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy, for I betrothed you to one husband, that to Christ I might present you as a pure virgin.

But I am afraid, now this shows how relevant Genesis is for us in this regard, I am afraid lest as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds should be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ. I espoused you to one husband, and in Paul's thinking this meant not only a relationship of love, and it was that, and thank God it is that, but a relationship of subjection. And so as he thinks of this, he says, I am afraid lest as the serpent beguiled Eve, he may beguile your minds, that you may be led astray from simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ.

He saw that as a real danger for the Christians. So authority is a basic question in Genesis. The rebellion against authority affects the rest of the history of the Bible as we know.

We move on to Exodus, and it was really the question there. Exodus as we know is the book of redemption from Egypt, and in chapter 5 a very challenging question is asked by Pharaoh. Chapter 5 and verse 2, but Pharaoh said, who is the Lord that I should obey his voice and let Israel go? I do not know the Lord, and besides I will not let Israel go.

Now here's the question of authority again, and Pharaoh recognizes it. He is a man himself who has authority. He knows what authority is, and he questions the authority of this God of the Hebrews.

Who is the Lord? He says that I should obey him. Again he challenges divine authority and suffers for it. Just as there was suffering consequent upon the disobedience in the garden, so now there is suffering for Pharaoh and for his hosts.

And we read about their demise at the Red Sea, and then we see the people are set free. But they are set free to obey. They are not set free to do their own thing.

Now there's a very real sense in which we should do our own thing. If you're talking about spiritual gifts, then you should certainly do your own thing. But doing your own thing today seems often to express not finding out what God wants you to do and doing it, but rather finding out what you want to do and doing it.

Happily those two things may be the same. If you're a spiritual person they will be. But if we are not spiritual, what we want to do and what God wants us to do will be two different things.

And we find here that these people were free, but they were free to obey. Exodus chapter 20 tells us that the Lord brought them to the Mount, to Mount Sinai. And then stating that he was the Lord, he commanded them what they should do and what they should not do.

They were redeemed, brought back for God, brought back to him. But the purpose of all this was that they should be submissive to him, and that they should express their freedom in doing the will of God. They were freed from Pharaoh's bondage in order that they might be brought into captivity to Jehovah, that their thoughts and their will might be subject only to him.

They were to have no other gods beside him. He was to be their Lord. Leviticus is the book of holiness.

Let us look at the 18th chapter please. I'm sure that if you're a Christian you are interested in holiness, because the Holy Spirit comes to indwell us when we're saved, and he gives us a desire to be holy. And Leviticus is the handbook on holiness, as it has often been called.

Leviticus 18 and verse 2, speak to the sons of Israel and say to them, I am the Lord your God. What the Lord goes on to say here is based upon the fact that he is the Lord, their God. You shall not do what is done in the land of Egypt where you live, nor are you to do what is done in the land of Canaan where I am bringing you.

You shall not walk after their statutes. You are to perform my judgments and keep my statutes, to live in accord with them. I am the Lord your God.

Now as Leviticus is a standard work on holiness in the Old Testament, so the book of Romans, particularly the 5th, 6th, 7th and 8th chapters are a handbook on holiness in the New Testament. And it's interesting to me to make a comparison here. Notice that in Leviticus chapter 18, he says, I am the Lord, and this is why you are to do this and that and the other.

And then he closes the remarks by saying, I am the Lord. In other words, my signature lies under all this, my authority is behind it all. Now if I want to be a holy Christian in a practical sense, if I want to learn the meaning of sanctification and living for the Lord, then I must recognize the validity of that word and the strength of that word, I am the Lord.

Romans chapter 5, 6, 7 and 8, as I have said, emphasize the truth of devotion to Christ, holiness unto the Lord, bringing forth fruit unto God, reaching a place of fellowship with God in likeness to Him and in likeness to Christ. And it begins in chapter 5, and I want you to notice this, don't turn to it if you don't wish to, but I want to notice this with you, and you should make a note of this if you haven't noticed it before, because it is important. That at the end of those instructive chapters on how to be a holy Christian, how to be practically holy, he begins those instructions by stating that we are under authority.

Chapter 5 and verse 21 reads like this, that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ. Now notice the words, our Lord, through Jesus Christ,

our Lord. In the sixth chapter he goes on to unfold these truths, and at the end of the sixth chapter, in the 23rd verse, we have those well-known words, for the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

In the seventh chapter, verse 24, in that chapter where a discovery is made of the wretchedness of man, and the believer is found not only hating the sins which he committed, but hating the man that he is, for he has committed them, discovering that he is under sin that he is dominated by evil habits which he would like to reject and put away. He says in verse 24, wretched man that I am, who will set me free from the body of this death? Thanks be to God, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Chapter 8, and notice that as we come to the climax of this teaching, he says in verse 38, I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

Now, no word from God is insignificant. The very fact that the Lord Jesus is so titled, Jesus Christ our Lord, at the end of each of these chapters, and the dominant theme through these chapters is the triumph and the lordship of Jesus Christ. It teaches me this, that just as in Leviticus, the Lord says I have a right to give these commandments, I have a right to expect obedience, and in obedience to these commandments you will find true holiness unto the Lord.

So in Romans 5, 6, 7, 8, in the New Testament, under grace as we say and not under law, the same principle applies, that we must come under the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ if we are to experience deliverance day by day in our lives. I move on for the sake of time, the book of Numbers gives us illustrations of rebellion and its consequences. In the book of Numbers, we're introduced to delegated authority.

Oh, it's there before that, but particularly we notice what happens when you come and you clash with divinely established authority. Numbers chapter 16, we read that they, the sons of Korah, rose up before Moses together with some of the sons of Israel, 250 leaders in the congregation, chosen in the assembly, men of renown. And they assembled together against Moses and Aaron and said to them, you've gone far enough for all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the Lord is in their midst.

So why do you exalt yourselves above the assembly of the Lord? Now that was not what Moses and Aaron were doing. God had given them their authority and Korah here was indirectly challenging the authority of God, expressed to Korah through Moses' leadership and the leadership also of Aaron. And the consequences that follow teach us that very important lesson, that if you challenge divinely established authority, God himself will not stand on your side, he will be against you.

The book of Deuteronomy confirms this very truth. I shall not look at one verse there, but again and again through the book of Deuteronomy we are told that there will be blessings for obedience. There are curses attached to disobedience, simply because the Lord is the Lord.

Hebrews 2 reminds us that every transgression received its just recompense of reward and makes application accordingly. When we get to the book of Joshua, we learn that entrance into and possession of the land of Canaan was dependent upon obedience, submission to the word of the Lord. You'll remember Joshua chapter 1, won't you? How it says that this book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth, but Joshua and those with him were to meditate on it day and night, Joshua 1 and 8, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it, for then you will make your way prosperous and then you

will have good success.

The book of Judges gives us an illustration of what happens when people don't do that. When they say I have a right to make my own decisions about spiritual things, I believe things should be done this way and instead of meditating in the law of the Lord and finding what the Lord has to say on that subject, they listen to the voice of their neighbors or listen to the cry of their own rebellious hearts and every man does that which is right in his own eyes. And the book of Judges is characterized, and you may note this both at the beginning and the end of the book, we are told that in those days every man did that which was right in his own eyes.

The book of Ruth is a lovely contrast in that you have a Gentile, an outsider who lived in those very days when anarchy prevailed in Israel. She was brought into the blessing of knowing the provision that the Jehovah of Israel could make for her. And although she was a Gentile, she came to trust under his wings.

It involves submission on her part. She said to Naomi, my God shall be your God. And as a result we have a lovely picture, a very human, touching, domestic picture of what it means to be under authority.

She found deliverance and she found security in being under the authority that God so graciously provided for her in the land of Israel. First Samuel through Second Chronicles, you get the same lessons taught again. These books establish a new order of delegated authority, the authority of a king.

Not now Moses leading the people, nor Judges, nor prophets as with Samuel, but now a king himself. We read a very important principle there and I want you to look at it. First Samuel please.

First Samuel and chapter 13. And here is another thing that I would like you to make note of under that other little sentence I gave to you. I would like to suggest that this teaches that a man's authority is only meaningful as he himself submits to authority over him.

Notice First Samuel chapter 13. And Samuel said to Saul, who is now established as king, you have acted foolishly, you have not kept the commandment of the Lord your God which he commanded you. For now the Lord would have established your kingdom over Israel forever, but now your kingdom shall not endure.

What horrible words for us to hear, what terrible words shall I say. They were the words of God, but how terrible they would sound on the ears of Saul. Your kingdom shall not endure, your authority is going to be broken.

Why Saul? The Lord has sought out for himself a man after his own heart and the Lord has appointed him as ruler over his people, because you have not kept what the Lord commanded you. Now you see the practical implication of this. Spiritual authority can only be exercised by those themselves subject to the word of God.

I'm speaking today to a number of people who are elders, or if they would not call themselves elders, they have to take responsibility in local churches. May I remind you, if you need reminding, we all do really, that we can only win the respect and we can only expect submission to our word, to our decision on things. And the church must have decision givers, it must have leaders, but we can only expect response to our guidance, to the help that we seek to give to those who are younger, as we ourselves are submissive to the word of God.

If young people discern that their elders are not in areas which are not related to them as young people, but in other areas which are related to the elder, maybe in the management of his home, maybe in his conduct in business, maybe in his attitude towards fellow elders. If young people sense that you yourself are not submissive to the word of God, you cannot expect that they will be submissive to you. But I will tell you something, when you learn to tremble at the word of the Lord, those who are under your care will learn to tremble with you.

When you learn to swiftly obey, they will learn to swiftly obey as well. Authority in the spiritual realm like that is very very sensitive. It can only really meaningfully be exercised while those who are to exercise that authority are themselves submissive to authority.

A tremendously important principle. Now in Ezra and Nehemiah, we're brought into an atmosphere of absolute subjection to the word and thus to God. Nehemiah chapter 10 verse 29, we know that these are books of revival.

All those who had knowledge and understanding are joining with their kinsmen, their nobles, and are taking on themselves a curse and an oath to walk in God's law which was given through Moses. Now notice that, hundreds of years have passed, but what are they doing? They're going back to that which is written in the beginning. God's authority has not changed.

God's word has not altered with the years. There is no doctrine of development here. There is no idea that God began this way in man's immaturity and historically in man's infancy.

And now man has matured, there will be a development, things will be changed. No, they're going right back to that which was written to their nation in the beginning. And there is authority in doing that, and there is blessing always in doing that.

You remember they came to ask the Lord Jesus about divorce, and he says as he speaks with authority on that subject, in the beginning it was not so. Goes right back to that which was written in the beginning. And that's what we have to do as Christians.

We have to dig back to the foundations, for they've been come encrusted sometimes with tradition. And our thinking has become foggy as we have assimilated ideas that are prevalent in the world around us. And we have to go back to that which was written in the beginning, for that has authority.

And I want to say from a word of personal testimony that this word is God's word. It is the word of authority, and in this word I find unspeakable blessing, but it demands absolute submission on my part. The psalmist said, I made haste and delayed not to keep thy commandments.

Oh, he says how I love thy law. What does all that mean? It means that he had learned to love a place of submission, for he had learned to love the God who expressed authority over him. And so we could go on through the Bible.

Time, I see, forbids for us to go through all the books, but in Esther we find there a book which reveals the abject shame and contempt of a people who had rejected authority. God's name is absent, as you know, in that book. And then we go through Job, Song of Solomon, those books of poetry right the way through there, where history is for us, as we read through the Bible, interrupted.

But Psalm 1 and all the Proverbs spare out the same lesson. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and don't be afraid of that word fear. You should fear God.

Now I know that perfect love casts without fear, but it develops another kind of fear. And it's right that we should fear the Lord. The prophetic books, what do they tell us? Well, we could go through one after the other, but I think that mainly their teaching is summarized by what Isaiah says in the first chapter.

If ye consent and obey ye will eat the best of the land, but if you refuse and rebel you will be devoured by the sword. Truly the mouth of the Lord has spoken. And so through the whole of the Old Testament, we are impressed with the fact that God has the right to speak.

His is absolute authority, and we do well to be submissive to it. When we come to the New Testament, it's first of all the story of one who said, lo I come in the volume of the book it is written of me, to do thy will, O God. And it is by that will, God's will, expressed so perfectly and completely in the life and ministry and the death and burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus, it's in that that we are sanctified and set apart to God.

By that act of obedience on his part, we are brought back to God. As he submitted to the will of his father, a will with which he was in complete harmony, as he submitted to that will and rejoiced in doing the will of his father, he obtained for us eternal redemption. And what is redemption for? We are freed, as Israel was freed.

Freed to obey. Ye were the servants of sin, says Paul in Romans chapter 6, but God be thanked. You have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine or teaching which was delivered to you, and to which you have been committed.

You obeyed from the heart that teaching. And the New Testament simply teaches us that under grace we learn to obey from the heart inwardly, because we are born again of the Holy Spirit, but we learn to obey just as Israel was told to obey. The Christian life is a life of obedience and of being under authority.

As a matter of fact, our reaction to the teaching given to us in the New Testament epistles is a test of our spirituality. You know, there is a thinking abroad that you can be spiritual by talking about the Holy Spirit, and I'm not against talking about the Holy Spirit. I reverence the Holy Spirit.

I want to learn to acknowledge more and more his gracious ministry in the life of God's people and in my own life. But you are not really a spiritual simply because you talk a great deal about the Holy Spirit, nor are you spiritual simply because you talk about the Lord Jesus a great deal, nor are you spiritual because you happen to be a preacher and stand behind a platform and talk at the Minneapolis conference. The Apostle Paul says, and this is the acid test, if any man among you thinks he's a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things which I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord.

There's the test of spirituality. There's the test of whether you are really walking in the Spirit. What made me begin thinking along these lines? Well, years ago, while I was in the United States somewhere, and I forget where it was now, maybe Chicago, I believe it was, I was talking to someone who was a leader in the field of education.

I was privileged to travel in the same taxi to the airport, and that's how we got into conversation. And the remark was made by this person who I presume could speak with authority. Our educational systems in the West have lost their moorings.

Schools were started by men, this isn't exactly what she said at the time, but schools were started by men who recognized the authority of the Scriptures. Philosophers, and this is what was said to me, philosophers have raised a devastating question and left it unanswered. Who has the authority to say what should be taught? Do you see how devastating that is to your educational system? If you have no authority, if you have nowhere to which you can turn to find out what should be, if there is no standard, if everything is open to question, everything.

Now there are lots of things that are open to question, but if finally you have no authority to which you can turn and say now this is it, this is where we must begin. If you have none of that, then your whole educational system is about to fall apart. We need to remember the word in Colossians.

It says there, see to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ. I want to say one word in closing this particular study with you, and I hope it hasn't been too heavy. It's an important foundation to the practical application of this that I want to get into, God willing, later today.

But let me summarize by saying this. In proper subjection to God's authority, wherever we may find it expressed, whether we find it expressed as vested in the ruler who has authority over our country, in the elders of a church or the head of a household, as we learn to be submissive to that authority which God has for the time, not for eternity, but for the time placed over us, we will find stability in society, and the individual will find security in being submissive to that which God has arranged for his good, as well as for God's own glory. Let us pray together.

Our Father, we come to you this morning in our weakness. We confess our need of grace from the Lord. The natural, the carnal man cannot enter into these things, and the fleshly mind is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.

We thank you Lord that we have been given life together with Christ, and we have learned the truth as it is in Jesus. We have come to one who himself was submissive to the will of his Father, and he is our Lord.

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