

# Fellowship - Part 4 (Authority)

by Lance Lambert

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*The principle of authority in the context of fellowship is the recognition of Christ's absolute headship over the church, and the submission of all aspects of church life to His will and guidance.*

**Duration:** 1:11:32

**Scripture:** 1 Peter 5:2

**Topics:** "Fellowship"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of recognizing Jesus Christ as the head of the church. He encourages believers to gather together before the Lord and establish their authority over Satan and any other spiritual forces. The speaker also highlights the principle of continuity, emphasizing that all that God has recovered in the history of the church is our heritage and should not be despised or rejected. The sermon concludes with the apostle Paul's words, highlighting the sacrificial and humble nature of true apostolic authority and urging believers to hold fast to the head, Jesus Christ, in order to overcome any problems or differences among leaders.

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## Transcript

Ephesians chapter one, and we shall read from the fifteenth verse. For this cause I also, having heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus which is among you, and the love which he show toward all the saints, cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him. Having the eyes of your heart enlightened, that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe, according to the working of the strengths of his might, which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead, and made him to sit at his right hand in the heavenly places.

Far above all rule, and authority, and power, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come. And he put all things in subjection under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all. This morning I'd like to take another principle of fellowship.

And the principle I want to, by the enabling grace of God, deal with, is the principle of authority. The principle of authority is this. Shall we put it like that? Can you still hear me, everybody? Good.

The principle of authority. I have no doubt in my own heart that it is over this principle that the enemy is working so very strongly. Either we find that there is no authority at all, and everybody does that which is right in his own eyes, it's a kind of free for all, and our gatherings, especially what we call house fellowships, become a kind of sort of place where we are released from all responsibilities, from all limitations, from all disciplines.

They are just places where we sort of enjoy the Lord, and where in many ways we find that we are living in a fool's paradise. For instance, you can go into one of these house fellowships. No one has to do any tidying up.

No one from the general company does anything about putting out any books or sheets. No one helps you at all in any way. You just come in, you just sit down, you just enjoy yourself.

There's no responsibility that you have to take. You're not necessarily punctual. You can come at any time, just drift in and drift out.

It's a kind of free for all. And in some quarters it seems that it's been almost reduced to a doctrine of freedom, that this is what it means not to be under law but under grace. And then of course you have the other end of the line, where we have such a recognition of authority, and such an enforcement of authority, that the whole thing becomes a hierarchy.

We are bound to obey. And whatever the brother says, whoever it is, we have to do what he says. And if we do not do what he says, we are ostracized and finally excluded from that company of believers.

In between there are a number of other varieties. And therefore I believe that this principle of authority in the matter of fellowship is vital. The first thing I would like to underline is the absolute headship of our Lord Jesus Christ.

God has made the Lord Jesus absolute head for the church. Now, Ephesians 1 and verse 22, He put all things in subjection under His feet and gave Him, that is Christ, to be head over all things to the church. Head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all.

Or again, in Colossians chapter 1 and verse 18, And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He might have the preeminence. No matter what the situation, no matter what the problems, no matter what the circumstances that we find ourselves in as the people of God, Christ has been made head over all things to the church. God recognizes no other head.

And all substitutes for Christ's headship are a terrible evil. Now, let me be quite clear here. We are not just talking about papacy, or an episcopacy, or some committee, or council, or board.

Most of us would probably feel, well, those are the kinds of things which get in the way of the headship of the Lord Jesus Christ. But you can have a New Testament pattern. You can have a group of elders which appears to be as New Testament as you can get.

But if those men substitute their head, their will, their brains, their intelligence for the headship of the Lord Jesus Christ, it is a pernicious evil. That is why you sometimes find in New Testament companies that appear to be really returning ostensibly and apparently to New Testament principles, we find that the thing is dead. As formal, as dead as anything institutional.

And younger ones ask themselves, why can we have a New Testament pattern and it be so dead? And I go somewhere else which hasn't got a New Testament pattern and I find life. They therefore come to the conclusion that God is not the least bit interested in any kind of pattern. This is wrong.

There is a pattern in one sense. It is within the life of our Lord. But there is a pattern.

Eldership as such is a principle. Because it is, as it were, the expression of the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ. But if those men put their head in the place of the Lord Jesus Christ, that becomes a pernicious evil.

It will effectively paralyze the work of God. It will, as it were, make that company of believers, it will make them lifeless. It will formalize them.

It is a strange fact that you could have a committee of men who have been so dealt with by the Holy Spirit that they are dependent upon the Lord. And they are thus so dependent upon the Lord that the headship of Jesus Christ can come right through them. And you can have a New Testament pattern where men have put their heads in the place of our Lord collectively or individually and destroy the flow of divine life.

Christ is not a democratic monarchy. Now, I shall have to explain this being here in a republic. But Christ is not a democratic monarchy.

He is not some kind of national figurehead. Now, you see, I come from a kingdom. I am a subject of the United Kingdom.

And in one sense I suppose I am quite proud of that. I think you folks have done very well since you have seceded. But I think you might have done a good deal better if you had stayed with us.

However, having said that on your bicentennial year, I have to tell you that I live in a constitutional monarchy. That is, a kingdom which has a constitutional monarchy. Now, what do we mean? We mean this, that the Queen is a democratic monarchy, belongs to a democratic monarchy, constitutional monarch.

In other words, she does not in actual fact rule the country. The country is ruled by Parliament. But the Queen signs everything and in that sense legalises everything.

In other words, at the opening of Parliament the Queen makes a speech to both the House of Lords and the House of Commons. And she may say things like this, I am going to nationalise the steel industry and so on. She may be very much against the nationalisation of the steel industry.

But she has to say it because her speech has been written by the party who has the majority. Now, she is reading a speech that has been written by for instance the Prime Minister Harold Wilson or somebody else and she has to read it as if it is her speech. And then there may be laws passed which are then taken to the Palace for the Queen's signature.

And when she has placed a signature on them, they become law. She is a national figurehead. She, as it were, unites the whole country above politics.

And I think that is a very good thing, but still. Now, what we have done with the Lord Jesus is to make him a democratic monarch. We have made him a constitutional monarch.

We have made him a kind of national figurehead. We write his speeches and give them in his name. For I should think about 90% of the sermons preached have nothing to do whatsoever with our Lord Jesus Christ in the sense that they originated with him.

But they are spoken in his name. We write his speeches for him. We put ideas into his head.

We use his name for all kinds of teaching and so on. We pass laws. Do you understand what I mean? We pass laws in his name.

I sometimes put it like this. You know the kind of the committee where we get together to discuss what we are going to do this coming autumn, this coming fall and winter. And we sort of say, now then we are going to have a word of prayer.

So and so will you lead us in prayer. We are going to seek the Lord now about the coming program. So we all bow our heads.

O Lord, we say, all 12 of us. O Lord, we say, this brother leads us. Do show us and reveal to us what is thy program for this coming fall and winter.

Give us to know thy will and thy mind. Sometimes it is not quite as clear as that. But never mind.

We ask him. Then we say Amen. To our Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.

And then whoever is chairing the meeting says, now so and so, I believe you have got the program for this coming fall and winter. Could we hear the bookings you have? And so we say, yes, we have got so and so book for so and so, book for so and so, book for so and so. And there is a little bit of discussion just as to whether we should modify this or adjust that or the other.

And then at the end of it we say, now then, let's bow our heads and we say, thank you Lord for revealing your will to us. And then for the rest of the fall and the winter we wonder why there is no blessing, why there is no abundant life, why the Lord does not seem to be committed to us. The fact is, we are passing the laws.

Do you understand? We just want his signature. We don't expect him to be an absolute monarch. We don't expect him to direct us.

We don't expect him to govern us. We just expect that we do all that in his name. We have made him a constitutional monarch that our Lord Jesus Christ is the practical and absolute head of the church.

Now we have made every mistake I suppose it is possible to make in Richmond, but if we have got anywhere by the grace of God it has been simply this, that we were stupid enough and dumb enough to believe that what God says in his book is absolute truth and that if he says that Jesus has been made head over all things to the church, Jesus is head over all things to the church. And in the head is the mind and in the head is the will and in the head is the intelligence. And therefore we recognize this one simple fact that if we were to get on our knees and really in every level of our life together ask the Lord, what would you have us do? How would you have us do it? Shall we go this way or shall we go that way? He would make known to us what is his mind.

Now we have found in our little experience that the Lord, if I may put it almost irreverently, has fallen over himself to let us know what his will and his mind is. As if it is such a rare thing for people to get on their

knees and actually say, Lord you are our leader, you are our director, you are our Lord, you are our head, our leader. Just because you can't see him people seem to think, well we can't see him so we better make this brother the head or that brother the head or these brethren the head.

Let them put their heads together. You see we have got this democratic idea that if you have got a few heads put together you are bound to be safe. But you can have five heads put together, you can have twenty heads put together, you can have a hundred heads put together, you can have a thousand, God forbid, a thousand heads put together and the whole lot can go off the rails.

The majority has rarely been right. Again and again and again you find that the minority has got the mind of the Lord. Haven't you found that, some of you good Baptists? Oh boy, I remember some of those church meetings I used to be in where again and again what the will of the Lord was for that company was outvoted by a vast majority.

The idea was that if you have got all those saved people the majority must be right, but they were not right. One thing after another was brought in by a majority. And I am talking about real believers, not just nominal Christians.

The fact of the matter is this, that in some very real way we have to recognize that Jesus Christ has been made Head over all things through the church. Our problem is that because we cannot see our Lord, because we cannot see as it were the Holy Spirit, we cannot put this into practice, we feel it is being mystical. But do you know on every single level of church life, whether it is children's work, whether it is young people, whether it is the whole church, whether it is the practical side, the material side of things, whether it is as it were spiritual policy for want of a better word, on every single level, if we will only get on our knees and ask the Lord for His mind, He will give it.

Now there are times when we have to wait for the Lord's mind. And that is what we find so difficult. You see, if we felt we could say, Now Lord, what shall we do about this? And He immediately said, Yes, do this and this.

We would find that easy. And there are times when the Lord says nothing. And we have to wait.

And wait. And wait. Every time we have had to wait, we have found that it has been abundantly justified in the end.

And there have been times when we have not waited, but we have gone ahead on things and we have fallen into tragedy. And when the Word of God says that our Lord Jesus Christ is Head of the Church, it means precisely what it says. He is Head of the Church.

Now dear child of God, dear family of God, we last night, and I felt as if I was floundering about in an ocean, but we tried, thought last night to say something about that principle of continuity. The fact that we are in something which God has been doing from the beginning of this age, and that we all belong together, and that all that God has recovered is our heritage, and we must not despise it, or devalue it, or reject it, not any single part of it. For if God is going to do anything in our generation, all the features that have been recovered in the history of the Church will be found amongst us.

I want just to say this, that all revival and renewal has flowed from a recognition of the simple fact that the Lord Jesus is Head over His people. It is as simple as that. Every single movement of the Spirit of God in the history of the Church has stemmed from the recognition on the part of a man, or a few men, or a

company of people, of the absolute headship of Jesus Christ.

It does not matter where you turn in the whole history, because every movement has begun with this. And shall I tell you this, every departure has stemmed from the rejection of the Lord Jesus as practical and absolute Head of the Church. The substitution of the Lord Jesus' Head with other bodies, or other sort of forms.

It seems such a simple thing, you know. I was speaking to someone the other day who told me that before he was saved, he found it the hardest thing in the world to kneel. He just could not kneel before the Lord.

I think this finds an echo in many of our hearts. Especially men. They find it so hard to bow before the Lord.

But you know, when we are saved, we still seem to have this resistance when it comes to government. The government of the Lord. We seem to find it hard to really just simply go... It is much easier to spend an hour discussing, discussing.

Backwards and forwards, backwards and forwards. Opinions here, opinions there. We come in with this, we come in with that.

This conception, this conception, that idea, that, this idea. It is much easier than to get on our knees and say, now Lord, we are putting aside all our opinions and conceptions and we want you to direct us. Now, don't get me wrong, there may be a place for fellowship.

But if only we began with a recognition of the headship of Jesus Christ instead of bringing in the headship of Jesus Christ after we have done all the talking. But that is what we do. We do all the talking and then we get on our knees and say, now Lord, now Lord, you know, just show us, just show us.

If only we would recognise Jesus's head. Do you know I wish that all our gatherings could begin that way? I think there comes a clarity into the gatherings of God's people when at the beginning of them there is a simple recognition of the headship of Jesus Christ. I go into some places where the brethren don't even pray before a gathering.

Everyone just drifts into it. They just drift into it. No one gets into the secret place of the Lord beforehand and recognises Jesus Christ as head and Lord over this gathering.

Don't you understand that we are not wrestling against flesh and blood but against principalities and powers? If we just drift into this kind of thing we shall find that the enemy gets a foothold from the very beginning. And what happens is often this. The meeting begins in a kind of hard, heavy way and only when we are just about to pass do we get through.

Do you know those kind of meetings? Just about a quarter of an hour before we go home we say, Ah, the sun has come out from the clouds. We feel as if the Lord is shining on us. All that should be done at the beginning.

There should be brethren who get together before the Lord, before gatherings and establish the fact that we are not subject to Satan. Nor to any of these principalities and powers. These rulers of worlds these hosts of wickedness.

We are under the headship of Jesus Christ. We want to show the flag. In good old days they used to send a gunboat up the river and show the flag.

And that was all that was needed. Now of course I shouldn't say that. But I mean, you know the kind, you do the same kind of thing over here.

You copied us, no end you Americans. You do the same thing. You show the flag in different parts of the world.

You know, send the old 7th fleet in or the 6th fleet in. I remember when there was trouble in the Middle East. This is a digression and not spiritual at all.

But I remember in the Eastern Mediterranean when there was civil war in Jordan. All you did was send the 6th fleet in. Just cruise round like on a pleasure tour.

And that finished the civil war in Jordan. Syria didn't even bother to attack Jordan. Then she was going to attack Jordan.

And if she had attacked Jordan, Israel would have attacked also. But they showed the flag. Do you know what we need to do is show the flag.

At the very beginning of our time, we want to show the flag. We want to say, Jesus Christ is Lord of this company. We are His people.

We are under His headship. We declare it. We confess it.

It's a simple recognition by which at the very beginning of our time we bow the knee and recognize Jesus as Lord and Head. And just the Holy Spirit says, Now I can commit myself. You have made a simple recognition that is so childlike.

But because you have made this recognition, all the anointing is yours. All the resources are yours. All the fullness is yours.

All the covering is yours. All the protection is yours. If you do not make this recognition, then I have to leave it.

Because it's as if you think you can get through without me. This is so when we have these times which we could call all sorts of business times or whatever you like to call them, you know, when we get together and we have to decide on policy or decide, make decisions and so on. Oh, if only instead of all this interminable discussion and that which we call fellowship, we could only first of all recognize the headship of Jesus Christ and recognize another simple thing, that we have no wisdom.

Years ago when I was first saved, she wasn't in my real arms, but I had a Swedish arm who adopted myself and my sister spiritually and looked after us and from her we learnt some of our first lessons. I remember that she used to say to me, now love, you make this your daily prayer. You take James chapter 1 and that verse 2 and 3 and you say to the Lord, Lord, I stand on your promise, if any man lacks wisdom, let him ask of God who gives to all men liberally and upbraidings not, and it shall be given him if he asks in faith nothing wavering.

Do you know that every day for about six years I used to stand on that promise. I think sometimes, you see, we get lazy after a while. We tend to think, well, I know the Lord.

I know something about the Bible and I'm a brother now. I'm a responsible brother. And we don't feel the need to recognise that we have no wisdom.

But if only at the beginning of our time He would have said, Lord, here we are. So and so has got a degree. So and so is very clever in this.

So and so, but we're so stupid, Lord, when it comes to the things of yourself. Lord, the more degrees we are, the dumber we shall be when it comes to thy work. O Lord, we cast ourselves upon thee see wisdom to us.

Manifest thyself as wisdom in us according to thy promise. This is a simple recognition of Jesus Christ as His. Now what I want to say further is this.

That this matter of fellowship about which we have been speaking is very, very much connected to the principle of authority. What do I mean? The reality of fellowship and the practice of fellowship flows from our connection to the head. Now I cannot make a statement more important than that in this matter of fellowship.

The reality of our fellowship and the practice of real fellowship flows from our direct connection to the head. Now what I mean is this. You all know this kind of thing where we all meet together but there's nothing between us.

We're all believers. We're all redeemed. We're all saved.

And some of us really know the law. And some are choice saints and yet there's no connection. And we all keep on saying, what's wrong? What's wrong? What's wrong? Here we are all sitting here and yet somehow we don't flow together.

We're not being built together. We're not being fitly framed together. We are not somehow knit together.

What is wrong? Now some people make the great mistake that we've got to get closer to each other. So they say, ah, we know what it is. We must have, we must have sort of meals together.

And some people will say, no, we must live together. That's the way. If we all live together we'll get closer together.

Others will say, we must pool our resources. Now I'm not just simply saying that these things are necessarily wrong. The early church in Jerusalem did exactly that.

They lived together in a community. They pooled all their money together. They ate together.

Their whole life was completely shared. It is an interesting fact that we have no other record of that again in the New Testament. Nevertheless, it was a valid experiment.

It was an expression of fellowship in Jerusalem. Antioch, evidently they didn't do that. They evidently, as far as we can tell, had all their own homes.

But there was a real fellowship because, you remember, the elders met together and fasted before the Lord. And it was during that time that the Lord said, separate me Saul and Barnabas under the works to which I have called them. Now my point is this, that we have to be in some way very livingly connected to the head.

Not to one another personally. Primarily, it's not to one another that we need the connection. Primarily, it is to the head that we need the connection.

Now let's just look at one or two Scriptures. Colossians chapter 2 and verse 19. And this is what it says, And not holding fast the head from whom all the body, being supplied and knit together through the joints and bands, increases with the increase of God.

Holding fast the head from whom all the body, being supplied and knit together through the joints and bands increases with the increase of God. Increasing with the increase of God is directly connected with holding fast the head. Or again, being supplied and knit together.

Oh, don't we need a supply? Don't we need a supply? Sometimes our fellowship gets into heavy weather, doesn't it? You know, we get sort of clouds come and we make real heavy, we make really heavy weather. But what we need is to hold fast the head, being supplied. What with? Grace.

With power. With grace. With divine resources.

With divine wisdom. Being supplied and knit together through the joints and bands increases with the increase of God. Now this is the point.

You make sure that your relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ as Head and Lord is absolutely clear and you will find the body. Don't firstly just try to get a horizontal relationship. First get the vertical relationship.

Then you'll find the horizontal relationship. Do you understand? Ephesians chapter 4. Ephesians chapter 4, verse 15 and 16. But speaking truth in love may grow up in all things into Him who is the Head, even Christ, from whom all the body fitly framed and knit together through that which every joint supplier according to the working in due measure of each several part maketh the increase of the body unto the building up of itself in love.

Grow up in all things into Him who is the Head, even Christ, from whom the whole body. I wish that this principle could be seen on every level of church life. I wish that all leadership could simply see that it is holding fast the Head that is so essential.

What problem have you got? Don't try to meet it with your own conceptions, even your biblical knowledge. Meet it by holding fast the Head. Are the problems between leaders? Meet those problems by holding fast the Head.

If I hold fast the Head and you hold fast the Head, we'll surely come together somehow. Whatever the problems are, whatever the difference of opinion, we'll surely come together if you hold fast the Head and I hold fast the Head. I wish this could be seen on every other level too.

You may be the youngest person in the church, the youngest person in the company of believers. You've only just been saved. But you know, if you will only learn from the very beginning to hold fast the Head and grow up in all things into Him as the Head, you will find your place in the body.

People often come to me and say they feel out of things. It's very interesting. You know, sometimes you go to a company that really have, a company of believers that have really gone places with the Lord and then you find somebody who you really feel knows the Lord and they come up to you and you know, they say, I feel so out of it.

One of the most common things I ever find going round is to find people who feel out of things. They write in things ostensibly but they feel out of it. The devil is the past master at telling us that we're not really in.

You know, well you're just nothing, you're not really in. And the only answer to this is to resist the enemy by holding fast the Head and growing up into Him as Head in all things. What does it mean to grow up into Him as Head in all things? That's an interesting thought, isn't it? Emboasting, holding fast, apprehending the Head.

It's a very strong word. Really taking hold of the Head. It's not that you just sort of drift into it.

But you've got to hold fast, arrest the Head, apprehend the Head, take a firm hold on the Head. And here's another very interesting word, grow up in all things into Him as the Head. Isn't that interesting? So that means that there are many problems, many circumstances, many situations in which we've got to learn to grow up into Christ as Head.

We've got to discover His Lordship, discover His Headship, discover His mind, discover His will and do it. We have to grow up in all things into the Head. The body, its oneness, its function, its growth, its increase, is all dependent upon the relation of members to the Head.

If one member is out of gear with the Head, that is an area of paralysis in the fellowship. Now you see, we're talking about sharing Christ. But we share Christ as every one of us keep in that direct relationship to our Lord as Head.

Now when this principle is obeyed, then you find life and fullness of life, you find development, you find resurrection all the time because every time you go into death you find that you come out into life, into resurrection. You find all these things as you obey this principle of the Headship, of the Lord Jesus. But when it is denied, even unwittingly denied, then immediately there is weakness, there is defeat, there is fragmentation, there is heaviness, there is inhibition.

Many companies I go into seem to suffer from a permanent heaviness. And I sometimes wonder whether it does not go back to this non-recognition of the Headship of the Lord Jesus Christ. Of course these folks really do recognize the Lord Jesus' Head, but they do not declare it.

They do not establish the fact as if somehow or other they are a million miles away from the enemy and from the world that lies in the evil one. Whereas we are in a world that lies in the evil one. We are wrestling.

That is not a polite sport like tennis or badminton or one of those sports. Wrestling is all sweat. Sometimes you get someone quite heavy and tough sitting on you, pinning you down to the ground.

You may have your arm twisted up your back or your leg nearly pulled off. Some Christians seem to think that there is no such thing in the Christian life as that. But we wrestle not against pleasure but against principality.

There are times when we must expect the enemy to sit on us. To get, as it were, our arm right up our back. We have got to learn how to get the victory.

Even in such situations. This isn't a tennis match where the enemy is over there and we are here and someone is chalking up the sort of mark. We are in something that can only be described as wrestling.

And we need to declare that Jesus Christ is Lord and His. Now, I'd like to just say something about the place of man in this because this is where we get a lot of our trouble. Now, let me say this straight away.

I have dwelt quite a lot on what some people would call the mystical side of things. I don't call it the mystical side at all. To me, it is intensely practical.

If our Lord Jesus Christ has been made head over all things to the church, it is the simplest, most practical, most obvious, most rational, most logical thing to do to get on our knees and recognize Him. On every level of our lives. Then we will see our life flowing through the church such as we have not seen before for many, many years.

We shall see the Lord beginning to qualify leadership, beginning to raise up ministries, beginning to give to people, because He is head. He is practically head and not just a figurehead. But the other area in which our trouble lies, of course, is the place of man in the headship of the Lord Jesus Christ.

What is the place of man in the headship of the Lord Jesus Christ? Well, we have to say that there is a place for man in the headship of Jesus Christ. There are those that are called elders. There are those that are called deacons.

On a wider scale, there is apostolic ministry. Now, of course, some people tell us that there is no such thing as apostolic ministry. When we look at the church, the history of the church, we discover that in every single movement of the Spirit of God, whether they are called apostles or not, there are men who have a unique anointing.

Now, one of our problems is this, that whenever we begin to get into trouble, we react against the trouble and go the other way. And this is a danger again. I wish we had time last night to talk about all these things.

I could give you example after example from the history of the church where tragedy has resulted because of reaction. Never, ever build anything on reaction. Reactions are rarely right because when we see something wrong, we react and tend to go the other way.

Now, let me give you one example of this which is a good example. Martin Luther went so far in his early years that it is almost incredible how far he went. For many years, some of the letters of Martin Luther were suppressed because they dealt with the matter of baptism.

In the last 30-40 years, those letters have been published in which Martin Luther writing to Philip Melancthon said this to him, we must seriously question the whole method of infant baptism. We must remain open to our law as to whether perhaps the New Testament teaches the baptism of believers. He was also very, very deeply influenced by what were called the Bohemian Brethren.

And the Bohemian Brethren had a kind of meeting together which was as near to the New Testament norm as you could get. And it was Martin Luther's vision that that should be, as it were, the kind of way

that the believers should gather together all over Europe who had, as it were, been revived by the Spirit of God. Then what happened? A group of men calling themselves the prophets began to, as it were, make all kinds of predictions.

And you will remember, those of you who know history, that a whole town and the whole area went over to these people. They practiced free love. They spoke in tongues.

They prophesied. They did all kinds of weird... They got themselves into a terrible mess. And Luther and the other Reformers were so horrified that they reacted so strongly that they went right back and never again were able to face any other thing in Scripture.

The Reformation ended not with what the devil did to the prophets of Babylon, but through the reactions of Martin Luther and the other Reformers to what was wrong. The devil froze him so that he withdrew back into the Catholic system and wouldn't even think of baptism again. Now, I could give you example after example from the Wesleyan era, from other eras where the same thing has happened.

Now, we are in danger of the same thing. We see things that have got truth in them, but truth carried to such an extent that it's become false. And we are in great danger that we throw the baby out with the bathwater.

For instance, we see in many areas now this kind of idea of authority which is not, in my estimation, genuine. It is the abuse of authority. And because of that we are getting so afraid that we react and react and react so that we can no longer think about it.

We must be very, very careful here. Truth is truth just for context. The largest number of people who die accidentally, die from food poisoning, we don't stop eating.

We may be more careful about what we eat, but we don't give up eating. Because divorce is growing and growing, we don't stop marrying people. Please turn the cassette over at this point.

What is the place of man in all this? The scripture says that the church is built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets. Of course not. Truth is truth.

So we must get a balance from this thing. What is the place of man in all this? The scripture says that the church is built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets. There is such a thing as apostolic authority and there is such a thing as apostolic ministry.

But nowhere in the whole Bible is it right for apostles to take into their hands churches and to rule them with a rod of iron and to systematize them and structure them so that somehow or other they are dependent upon that apostle. That is wrong. It is absolutely wrong.

There are other things we can say too in this matter of the place of man. Elders, it says quite clearly in Hebrews and chapter 13 and verse 17 Obey them that have the rule over you and submit to them for they watch in behalf of your souls as they that shall give account that they may do this with joy and not with grief. For this were unprofitable for you.

We are told that we are to obey them that have the rule over us. I shall say something on another occasion as to how we recognize elders and how they come. But let me just say this that when God has raised up men who really are qualified by His Spirit as elders, as elder brethren, we are to obey them.

We are to pray for them. We are, as it were, to cover them in the name of the Lord. But we are to obey them.

Authority, the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ is expressed at times through men. And that's where we have our problem, isn't it? When it comes to men. Now I have here this blackboard and the reason I have this blackboard is I want just to draw a very simple diagram on it which may help some of you.

There is a teaching, I don't think it is necessarily wrong, but there is a teaching that this whole matter of authority is like a pyramid. We have this very much in Britain. It is a pyramid.

At the top you have the elders. Now this is a local church. And at the bottom you have the church.

And if you like here you have the responsible ones. All right? Now my writing is terrible. But that gives you some idea.

The idea is this. Here is the ordinary mass of the church, the members of the body of Christ. Here are the responsible ones and here are the elders.

We have a pyramid. We are to obey them that have the rule over us. In many ways this is not wrong.

There is very much in the word of God about the authority of elders or the authority of those with apostolic ministry. I like to put it another way and I am very interested to find how violent a reaction this produces. This is the way I put it and I believe this is totally scriptural.

Elders, responsible ones, the whole church. All right? Now why do I do it that way? Because elders were never meant just to be some kind of exhibition of authority. You do what I say.

I am an elder. You just do what I say. The whole point of eldership is that they carry the whole burden and anguish of the church.

This is the smallest point and can take the greatest weight. Now is that biblical? It is absolutely biblical. How? Because we read this kind of thing in 1 Peter 5 and verse 2. Can the flock of God which is among you exercising the oversight not of constraint but willingly according to God nor yet for filthy lucre but of a ready mind neither as lording it over the charge allotted to you but making yourself ensampled to the flock.

Now again, listen to these words of our Lord Jesus in Mark and chapter 10 and verse 42. Jesus called them to Him and said unto them Ye know that they who are accounted to rule over the Gentiles lord it over them and their great ones exercise authority over them but it is not so among you but whosoever would become great among you shall be your servant your minister and whosoever would be first among you shall be servant of all or slave of all for the Son of Man also came not to be ministered unto but to minister and to give His life a ransom for many. Now what do these words of our Lord Jesus say? Simply this that if you and I would be elders or have any authority like this we have got to be the slave of the whole church.

It is interesting that the Lord used two words here first He used the word for a hired servant and secondly the word for a slave. A slave of course had no rights at all. Listen, He said whosoever would become great among you shall be as your hired servant.

That is anyone in the church can come and say come and you have got to come. You have got to serve them. You have got to be in in one sense of their beck and call.

But He says whosoever would be first among you must be the slave. Even the hired servant has got rights. But the slave has no rights at all.

Whoever would be first must be slave. Oh dear, dear family of God if only this idea of authority had not been warped in our minds. Our idea of authority is of people who can walk around saying do this and you do it.

Do that and you do it. You must obey me and you must. If only we had seen that real authority was in our Lord Jesus Christ when He laid down His life for us and allowed the very creatures that He had created to nail Him to a tree that had been created by Him.

You see our idea so often of royalty of kingship is pedigree title robe position the mystique of royalty the father they are away from you the more somehow awesome and majestic they are. But our Lord Jesus wasn't like this. Do you know that when the Lord Jesus went from the garden of Gethsemane they stripped Him of His clothing they stripped Him naked that stripped all the mystique of royalty from Him the outward thing they spat upon Him they pulled out the hair of His beard they lacerated His back by scourging they dressed Him up in a captain's cloak put a reed in His hand and jammed a crown of thorns on His head and bowed before Him and said Hail King of the Jews!

But it was at that time when the Lord Jesus was stripped of all the paraphernalia of royalty when He was stripped of all those kinds of things which we tend to think make for royalty and majesty that He was more royal than He has ever been before for He revealed that His kingship is not built on position or title or clothing or sort of outward things but it was built on an inner character there was no crown that ever graced a monarch's brow more powerful than the crown of thorns and no scepter in the hand of some great despot has ever been more powerful than the reed in the hands of the Lord Jesus Christ He proved once and for all that He was worthy to be King of kings and Lord of lords anyone who can be stripped of all the mystical royalty and come out as a king is worthy of the throne

of God now this is a kind of kingship you and I know nothing about some people seem to think that one day in the kingdom to come we are all going to sit on golden thrones draped around the halls of heaven you know, sort of sparkling diamonds on our hands and sort of generally exhibiting ourselves we are kings as I have said before God preserve us if some Christians ever get onto those thrones crabby little natures that they've got never allowed God to expand them never allowed God to do any work in them they've never all they can do is hold on to position hold on to title hold on to the outer paraphernalia of office because that's all they've got kingship is not in outward things it is in character it is in life it is in nature and that's everyone who would come to the throne of God must

go the way of the Lord Jesus Christ there are times when we will be stripped of everything when we will be ridiculed derided devalued and it's at those times that real kingship will be found in us no man ought to be an elder who is not prepared to lay down his life for the church no man can be an apostle or in apostolic work or ministry who is not prepared to lay down his life for the Lord and for the people of God we have no other safety dear family otherwise we shall find that they will come into position men who glory in their position who are building their own little empires who somehow or other are only interested in a kind of platform for themselves you know so many of our companies our house fellowships can become platforms for little dictators they could not get anywhere any

other place and so they come into their own little domain let God preserve us from it all this is not meant in any harsh critical superior spirit what I'm saying is this that this principle of authority is not something of

outward might an outward paraphernalia dependent on position and title you are an elder therefore a man is qualified as an elder because he is able to let go of his name of his reputation of every single thing he's got and is prepared to become the slave of the whole church that the church might be built up that's why I put them at the bottom they take the whole weight upon themselves they carry the whole church in their heart they have as it were everything weighing upon them isn't this what the apostle Paul says in 1 Corinthians and chapter 4 he says in verse 1 let a

man so account of us as of ministers of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God verse 9 for I think God has set forth us the apostles last of all last of all as men pruned to death for we are made a spectacle unto the world both to angels and men we are fooled for Christ's sake but ye are wise in Christ we are weak but ye are strong even unto this present hour we both hunger and thirst and are naked and are buffeted and have no certain dwelling place and we toil working with our own hands being reviled we being persecuted we endure being defamed we entreat we are made as the filth of the world the offspouring of all things even until now my dear friends that is apostleship if we were to have that kind of apostolic authority oh God be blessed and praised what a change there would

be in the life of God's people here there is no empire building here there is no structuring of everything according to ourselves here there is no, as it were setting forth of our own power and title and position here there are men who are prepared to die doomed to death so that the church might know resurrection life here there are men who are prepared to fall into the ground and die so that there can be an abundant harvest men who are prepared to lose their name that other names may be known everywhere men who are prepared to die so that the body of the Lord Jesus Christ might be reproduced and built up all over the earth I have really said so much and there is so much more I would like to say on this matter of the principle of authority but if you want to see this principle of

authority look at our Lord Jesus Christ and if you see in Him anything that is avaricious anything that is selfishly aggressive anything that is self-centered I would like to know the principle of authority is that a man can be nailed to the cross by the very people he has come to serve and in that moment has supreme authority the principle of authority is that they can strip you the very people you came to save of every single thing that you've got and do you injury and death spite and at that moment you reign supreme that is spiritual authority dear friends this is the authority we need we don't want this worldly authority we don't want this thing that belongs to that world of pomp and show and position and title Jesus said you shall not be called Rabbi you shall not be called Master

you shall not be called Father for you are all brethren and you have only one Father and Master but we need this authority this is not just something that's a luxury this is a principle without it fellowship will fragment without it there will be just a dissipation of all the values of the finished work of our Lord Jesus Christ my time is nearly over but I would like to say one last thing I've spoken about the place of man in the headship of Jesus Christ I would lastly just like to say this what wonderful consequences there are when the authority of Christ is present when the headship of Christ is a living practical reality and there is real fellowship amongst the company of God's people there are some marvellous consequences it is so simple really the great result is that the authority

of the risen glorified head of the church is manifested on earth head over all things to the church which is His body in 2 Corinthians and chapter 10 we read this although we walk in the flesh we do not war according to the flesh for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but mighty through God through the casting down of strongholds casting down imagination and every high thing that is exalted against the

knowledge of God and bringing every force into captivity to the obedience of Christ oh to know such an authority to know such an authority that we as the people of God wherever we are in Richmond or Raleigh or Glassboro or wherever else you come from that we might know the manifestation of the authority of our risen head in our midst there are strongholds if you like,

fortresses strong points of Satan in our area and we will never know any relief until those things are cast down there are imaginations which hold people in their grip and bondage high things exalted against the knowledge of God what are these ideologies? they are high things exalted against the knowledge of God thought every single thing begins with a thought communism Marxism began with a thought in the head of Karl Marx Maoism began with thought in the head of Chairman Mao oh if only the church could have taken those thoughts at the very beginning into captivity to the obedience of Christ doesn't mean that those people are necessarily saved but we can take a thought captive because of the position of the church oh dear child of God if only we the people of God were in the position we

ought to be if only we had dominion if only we were exercising authority if only we were reigning as kings on the earth wouldn't it be wonderful God has given us keys keys are not ornaments keys are power authority I have such a little key here, look at it some of you have trouble getting in and out of your doors but normally speaking with such a little piece of metal you don't think about it, do you? you just go up the drawer, put it in open it, do it I know people who go to the door and without even all the time talking as they just put the little bit of metal in the hole and do it you only ever think about keys when you've lost them you go to the car and you open it and you're in and you're given away in a few moments it's only when you've lost the keys you have problems God has given

the church the keys of the kingdom of heaven whatsoever we bind on earth is bound in heaven and whatsoever we loose on earth is loosed in heaven that is the principle of authority oh that God would work such a fellowship in the heart of us all that we might know something of this principle of authority shall we pray Lord we bow here before thee and we do pray together that somehow Lord thou would reveal to us this matter of authority thou seest Lord all the many things that are happening all over the world in connection with the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ of one thing we are clear father that thou hast made our Lord Jesus head over all things to us the church and we recognize that glorious fact and confess that he is our head and oh beloved Lord we pray that thou burn this truth

into our heart by thy spirit give us a clarity over it Lord give us a directness over it that we've never had before help us to hold fast the head and thus discover the body help us to grow up in all things into him as the head father so that we may know the body building up itself in love oh father we pray that thou would clear up all these ideas of man's place in the headship of the Lord Jesus Christ give us men Lord who are selfless men who are crucified men father who know the power and fullness and anointing of the Holy Spirit give us such men as leaders Lord we pray oh our beloved head let the word go out for the raising up of such men who shall Lord be ensembles to the whole flock of God Lord raise up men with apostolic ministry and authority men who shall lay down their lives

father that thy work may go forward in this world oh father hear us we give it over to thee thou know Lord I've talked about this matter of authority in my childish way oh God use the words thou hast enabled me to say by thy spirit to burn this matter into every heart that we may be those who really do follow the Lamb with us wherever he goes we ask it in his name Amen

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