

A Look at Authority 1: Spiritual & False

by Stephen Kaung

Authority is not something we can obtain by asking or assuming a position, but rather it is a manifestation of spiritual life and the will of God.

Duration: 1:19:22

Scripture: 1 Samuel 15:22-23, Matthew 28:18, Mark 10:45, Romans 13:1, 2 Corinthians 10:8, Ephesians 4:12

Topics: "Authority"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the concept of authority in serving. He refers to Mark 10:45, where Jesus states that he came not to be served, but to serve and give his life as a ransom for many. The disciples were arguing about who was the greatest, and Jesus teaches them that in his kingdom, greatness is found in being a servant to all. The preacher highlights the importance of understanding true authority and how it should lead to humility and serving others. He also mentions the need for authority in building up the church and joining people together.

Transcript

You please turn to the book of Romans. Romans chapter 13, just the first verse. Let every soul be subject to the authorities that are above him, for there is no authority except from God, and those that exist are set up by God.

2 Corinthians chapter 10, verse 8. For, and if I should boast even somewhat more abundantly of our authority, which the Lord has given to us, for building up, and not for your overthrowing. 1 Samuel chapter 15, verses 22 and 23. And Samuel said, has Jehovah delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in hearkening to the voice of Jehovah? Behold, obedience is better than sacrifice, attention than the fat of realms.

For rebelling is as the sin of divination, and self-will is as iniquity and idolatry. And then finally, Philippians chapter 2. We read from verse 5 through verse 11. For let his mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus, who, subsisting in the form of God, did not esteem it an object of repine, to be on an equality with God, but emptied himself, taking abominable form, taking his place in the likeness of man, and having been found in figure as a man, humble himself, becoming obedient even unto death, and that the death of the cross.

Wherefore also God highly exalted him, and granted him a name that which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of heavenly and earthly and infernal beings, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to God the Father's glory. As we mentioned last night, the burden that we have for this time is on this matter of spiritual authority. First of all, I would like to say again, do not be afraid of authority.

Do not have a kind of unconscious resistance in your mind and in your heart when this word authority is mentioned. I think much is because of our misunderstanding, or not understanding what authority really is, because if by the grace of God we see what authority really is, it is the most blessed thing, and I do believe that we will welcome it instead of being afraid of it. At the very outset, we would like to lay down a fundamental truth concerning authority, and that is, there is no authority except from God.

Even though the Apostle Paul, when he was writing that letter to the Romans, the authorities that he mentioned in Romans 13 are delegated authority. In other words, they are earthly authorities that God has set up. Nevertheless, it does tell us a very fundamental truth, and that is, there is no authority except from God.

To put it in another way, it simply tells us that God is the only authority in the universe. There is no authority whatsoever except God himself and what God has given. Now I do believe that in a way we all know this, but unfortunately I am afraid that this concept does not really sink into our heart, and I think it is because of this.

There is so much misunderstanding about authority. We mistake something that is commonly accepted as authority without really knowing what authority really is. So I do hope that this fundamental truth will really enter into our hearts.

There is no authority but God. God is the one and only authority. Any professed authority that is not from God, that is not God himself, is not real authority, because God is the only authority in the whole universe.

Why is it that he is the authority of the universe? Because he is God. He is the creator of all things. All things came from him, and for this reason he has the right over all things.

You know this word authority in Greek is exosia. Now it comes from an impersonal verb, existi, which means it is lawful. It is lawful.

From the meaning of the liberty of doing things according to one's pleasure, it has become this word authority. That is the authority to exercise power. The freedom of action, free to act as he wishes.

Now that is what authority really means. With God, his authority is absolute and is unlimited. And because of this we have to give to God absolute obedience and absolute submission.

God is the only authority in the universe. His authority is direct, not delegated. He is authority because of what he is.

His authority is inherent in him. He is the authority. Now it is true, he does delegate authority to others.

Sometimes to angelic beings, other times to human beings. But even though he delegates authority to others, he has never given up his authority. And furthermore, what he has given is limited, is not absolute.

In other words, he still retains in himself the authority of the universe. Now his authority must be obeyed. It cannot be challenged.

And if his authority is challenged, there will be the consequence. This is the authority of God. Now brothers and sisters, knowing that God is the authority and nothing else, nobody else.

Now we like to know what is the nature of God's authority. I think much misunderstanding of authority is because we do not know the nature of authority. And that's the reason why we cannot distinguish between true authority and false authority.

So I think it is very, very important for us to know what is the nature of God's authority. We say that God is the only authority. So we need to know what is the nature of his authority.

First of all, we know that authority is the extension of God himself. In other words, authority is something that comes out of him. It is natural with him.

It is the result of who he is, what he is. It is the expression or the manifestation of his very character. It is part of him.

And because of this, what is the nature of authority? Of God's authority? Now we know that God is spirit. In John chapter 4, you remember, when the Samaritan woman had a talk with our Lord Jesus, and our Lord gradually led her to this matter of worship. And explaining worship to this Samaritan woman, the Lord said, God is spirit.

Therefore all who worship God must worship him in spirit and in truth. So essentially God is spirit. Now if God is spirit, then the authority that comes out of him must be spiritual in nature.

So authority is spiritual in nature. It is not something that you put on. It is something that comes out of what he is.

It is spiritual. It is not positional. It is true that God does have a position.

We say in this song, we place you Lord on the highest place. In other words, he has the highest position. That is true.

But his position is because of what he is. Not because of what it is made. So in other words, his position is the result of his spirituality.

Because he is spirit, therefore his authority is spiritual in nature. It is not something to be grasped at. It is inherent in his very self.

So you remember in the Philippines it is said of our Lord Jesus, he the son of God, he is equal with God. That is his position. He is equal with God.

But that is not something to be grasped at. Because it is his. You remember one day when our Lord Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem.

It was his last trip to Jerusalem before his crucifixion. And as he was approaching Jerusalem, you know in the mind of the disciples, they thought that this was the time of the glorification of their master. They thought this was the time that the Lord Jesus would go to Jerusalem to claim his kingdom.

Now it is true. This is the time for his glorification. But his glorification is not assuming the throne on earth.

On the contrary, if you read the scripture, you will find that the glorification that he was talking about actually was his crucifixion. But the disciples did not understand that. They thought the Lord was going to Jerusalem to receive his kingdom.

So that was a very critical time for them. You know during the three and a half years following the Lord Jesus, they were arguing among themselves all the time about who is the greater one, who is the greatest. Again and again the Lord tried to correct them, instruct them, but somehow it didn't sink into their heart.

So even at the last minute, you find that they were still thinking of the same thing. And this was the last opportunity. So you remember that story how John and James, they get hold of their mother, who was humanly an aunt to our Lord Jesus.

And they asked their mother to come to plead for them. So they came to the Lord Jesus and said, Lord, give us what we ask for. And the Lord said, what do you want? So you remember, the mother said, in your kingdom, let my two sons, one sit on your right side and one sit on your left side.

Position. Therefore that authority is a matter of position. If you can get that position on the right and on the left, then you have all authority of the right and of the left.

And you know how our Lord Jesus answered them? The Lord said, are you able to drink the cup that I'm going to drink? Are you able to be baptized with the baptism that I'm going to be baptized with? Now actually, John and James did not understand what the Lord was talking about. Because in their mind, their mind was full with this matter of right and left hand. So whatever the Lord said, not even considering it, not even knowing what the Lord really meant.

They wanted that position so much. They said, yes, we will be baptized with the baptism that you are baptized with, even though we don't know what that baptism means. We will drink the cup that you're going to drink, even though we do not know what that cup is.

But anyway, we want that position. And the Lord said, it is not for me to give. It is for the Father to decide who to give.

In other words, here the Lord said, you must drink the cup that I'm going to drink. Now of course, you quickly connect this cup with the scene of Gethsemane. Because you remember our Lord on the night of his betrayal, how he entered into that garden, and he was deeply depressed.

And he asked his disciples to wait there, and the three to pray with him. And he went for a stone's throw, and there he agonized in prayer. Father, if it is possible, let this cup be passed from me.

But not my will, thy will be done. That is the cup he was talking about. What is the cup? The cup is a portion.

Even though the cup that our Lord was talking about was a bitter cup. But the cup represents the will of God. Whatever the will of God may be, whether it is bitter or sweet, thy will be done.

When I was in Toronto recently, I mentioned this to our brothers and sisters there. You know, when our Lord Jesus, who was equal with God, he emptied himself. He took the form of a bond slave, even the fashion of a man.

In doing that, he laid down all the glory, power, honor that was rightfully his. He laid everything down as God. Not laying down his deity, though.

He couldn't do that. He is still God. But he laid down everything that belonged to God.

Power, glory, honor, majesty, worship. He laid down all these things. He emptied himself of all these things in order to become a man.

In order to become a bond slave before God. The Lord gave up a great deal. But, brothers and sisters, even though he did give up all the glory and honor and power in connection with his deity when he came to be a man, these did not touch his character.

He is still holy. He is still perfect. He is still pure.

These do not touch his very being, his character. But in the garden of Gethsemane, brothers and sisters, why is it that our Lord agonized so much over this matter of the cup? Because in drinking that cup, it touched his very being. It touched his very character.

Because he who knows no sin is to be made sin for us. Now, brothers and sisters, that is the reason why he shrank back as a perfect man. But even so, the love that he had for us, he was willing to be defiled, contaminated, completely misunderstood, rejected by God and man, in order, think of the love, that is the cup he was talking about.

And he was willing to drink that cup to the fullest. Brothers and sisters, the Lord said, are you able to drink the cup that I am going to drink? In other words, are you willing to accept the Father's will, whatever it may be? You know what we are. If it is a sweet cup, we enjoy it.

If it is a bitter cup, we want it to be passed from us. But the Lord said, if you really want authority, it is not a matter of position, it is a matter of spirituality. What is spirituality? Simply it means, here is a person who is willing to accept the will of God, whatever it may be.

Are you able to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? Now, of course, the baptism that he refers to is the cross. Because at the beginning of his ministry, how he was baptized? By John the Baptist, in order to fulfill all righteousness. And that baptism is really a type of the cross, that he was going to be crucified.

Now, what is baptism? Baptism simply means death. You do not baptize a person who is living, because you will bury him alive. So, unless we see that we have died in Christ Jesus, we have died to our old man.

And therefore, we go into the water to be baptized, to be buried out of sight. And as we come out of the water, it is a new creation, a new person. That is what baptism means.

And that is what the cross means. The cross is the place where Christ, the cross is a place where you and I were crucified. The cross is a place where self is denied, is laid down.

That is the baptism. So the Lord said, are you able to be baptized with the baptism that I am to be baptized with? In other words, are you able to deny yourself? Are you able to take up my cross, your cross, and follow me? To the very end that you be crucified, self be completely. Are you willing? Are you able to do that? It is not a matter of position.

It is a matter of denying yourself, laying down your life. It is a spiritual. Maybe we are willing, but are we able to? So dear brothers and sisters, first of all, we will see that authority is spiritual in nature.

If you really desire authority, then remember, it is not something for the asking. And if you ask for authority, do you know what you are asking for? You are asking for the cup. You are asking for the baptism.

And only those who by the grace of God, not only are willing, but are able to drink the cup and baptize with the baptism, then the Father will decide where you will be. So this whole matter of authority, I am afraid, is completely misunderstood. And if we first of all can really understand the nature of authority, then I do believe that it will save us a lot of trouble.

You may not dare even to ask for authority. But it is something to ask for, not for yourself. Because later on you will find that authority is a most glorious thing.

But anyway, the first nature of authority is spiritual, not positional. Second, authority is of life. In Psalm 36 verse 9 it is said, with thee is the fountain of life.

In thy light do we see light. God is authority. Why? Because he is the fountain of life.

He is life itself. And life always carries authority. The apostle John says, that which was from the beginning, that which we have heard, we have seen, we have contemplated, and we have touched, concerning the word of life, and that life has been manifested.

We have seen and heard, and now we report it to you. That you may have fellowship with us, and our fellowship is with the Father and with the Son, that your joy may be full. In John chapter 1 verse 4 it says, in him was life, and the light was the light of man.

In other words, you will find that our God is the God of life. He is full of life, and he is not only full of life, but he gives life. Everything comes out of his life, and that is the reason why he is the authority over all.

Authority is not something you assume. Authority is the result. I do not have a good illustration.

I struggle over it, but I will use it as an imperfect illustration. You know, in our family, why is it that the children must obey their parents? One reason is because they live longer than we do. They have more life.

Or, we may even put it in another way, they give us life. Of course, God gave us life, but our parents do give us life, and they nourish us, and they bring us up. So, in other words, the parents, they have that position as parents, not because they assume that position.

It is because they have more life, and that is the reason why they have more authority over the children. Or, when you think of the Church of God. Now, in the Church of God, you will find the Bible tells us of the elders.

Now, whether those elders are really older physically, or in age, or they are older spiritually, I think the latter probably is more right. But, of course, you know, spiritual growth, spiritual life, the growth of spiritual life takes time too. So, in other words, you will find in the Church you have the elders.

And the elders represent in the Church the government of God. Now, why is it so? It is not because some people assume their position. It is because, among the brothers and sisters, they seem to have more life of Christ in them.

They seem to have more manifestation of spiritual life. And because their life is at least a step ahead of us, therefore, they represent more of the authority of God. So, in other words, it is not something that anybody can assume.

It is because of the life of Christ within them. As a matter of fact, the more spiritual life you have, the more authority there is. For instance, we are all familiar with Barnabas and Paul.

And you will find in Acts chapter 13, how when the five prophets and teachers were ministering unto the Lord, and the Holy Spirit said, set me apart, Barnabas and Paul, for the work that I am going to send them to. And these two men were set apart as apostles, and they go forth. And, of course, there was little John with them as an attendant.

So they travel from Antioch and they go to Cyprus. And as you read the Bible, you find that when they went forward, it was always Barnabas and Paul. In other words, even with the two apostles and with a little John, you find that there was an order there, a divine order there.

And that divine order is not something that was arranged or assumed. Barnabas did not assume that because I knew the Lord before you saw Him. Therefore, I will take the lead and you just follow me.

And I was the one who introduced you to the saints in Jerusalem. Everybody was afraid of you, but I believed you and I introduced you to Peter. So, therefore, I had to be the leader.

Or it is because I found you out in Tarsus and brought you to Antioch, and you were under my apprenticeship for a whole year. Therefore, I had to take the lead and you just followed. No, there was nothing arranged.

There was nothing assumed. The Holy Spirit says, set me apart, Barnabas and Paul. That's all.

But somehow you find there was an order there. Not assumed, but of life. But strangely you find when they travel in Cyprus, on the way, suddenly you find the order began to change.

The Holy Spirit in the Word of God tells us it is Paul and his company. Saul changes his name to Paul. And Paul and his company.

Now, Paul means little. The little and the company. Now, little John wasn't happy about it, because you know John was a relative of Barnabas.

And when he discovered that the order had changed, he couldn't accept it. And he left. But thank God Barnabas knew the Lord.

Without any protest, willingly he took the second position. Now, so you find here, it is not a matter of trying to get to a position. It is a matter of the manifestation of life.

Somehow Paul's life, or the Christ's life in Paul, seemed to be more manifested than Christ's life in Barnabas. And because of that, you find Paul took the second position. It is a matter of life.

Now, if we can see this, then brothers and sisters, there should be no argument. You cannot argue about life. If life is there, it is there.

If it is not there, no matter how you argue, it is not there. If there is a more measure of Christ in that brother, it is there. And if you do not have that measure of Christ, it is evident.

Everybody knows it. It is something that you cannot argue. You cannot assume.

Because it is purely a matter of life. When people begin to argue over this matter of authority, you know for sure, he is outside. Furthermore, King's authority is of life.

When a person is in life with the Lord, there is authority. But the moment he is not living in the life of Christ, that authority is gone. This is very important.

I will explain that later on. So authority is of life. Not something anybody can assume.

Thirdly, authority is in giving, not in gaining. You know our whole concept of authority is gain. If I have authority, then I gain a lot.

I can force people to do what I want them to do. I gain a lot for myself. Authority is in giving, not in gaining.

Think of God. Our God is the great giver. He is so rich, He is so full.

The fullness of the Godhead is something beyond our comprehension. We cannot understand. And yet you find all the time God is giving.

Giving. God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son. Christ loved the church and gave Himself.

You know there is authority in giving. The one who gives has authority over the one who receives. That is very natural.

The more you give, the more authority you have. The Lord Jesus said, I gave myself a ransom. Because He gave Himself as a ransom for many, therefore the many come under His authority.

Fourthly, in connection with this, authority is in serving. You know that famous verse in Mark 10, verse 45. The Lord Jesus said, I do not come to be served, but to serve.

And to give my life a ransom. You know, the disciples they were arguing among themselves who is the greater one. So our Lord began to teach them a lesson.

The Lord said, in this world those who rule lord over other people. Those who are great, they exercise authority. But not so among you.

The Lord said, among you the great is to be your servant. The first is to be your bond slave. For I do not come to be ministered to, but to minister.

And to give my life a ransom. Now brothers and sisters, when you think of this matter of great, it is a matter of first. We all want to be great.

We all want to be first. Now in the world, the great and the first are those who sit high up and they rule over other people. Now that's the way in the world.

That's the world concept of authority. The world concept of authority is a position. When you get to that position, then you can lord over everybody else.

Then you are great. You are first. But the Lord said, not so in your midst.

I'm afraid, brothers and sisters, we haven't heard the Lord. When the Lord said, not so in your midst, in our mind we say, it is still so. Now it's very revolutionary, brothers and sisters, if you understand what the Lord is talking about.

The Lord said the whole concept of world authority has to be thrown out of the window. Do not ever let any of that concept contaminate you. Not so, not so in your midst.

This is the world. Now in your midst, what is authority? What is great? What is first? The Lord said, the great among you is to be servant. Now brothers and sisters, to be great and to be servant of the Lord.

That sounds good. But the Lord said, to be great among you is to be the servant of all of you. Now that's difficult.

Do you want to be great? You have to be servants to all your brothers and sisters. Now who are your masters? Of course the Lord is my master. But aside from the Lord, who are your masters? Your brothers and sisters.

Now we think of the great is, you become master of your brothers and sisters. They are your servants, you give orders, you tell them what they do, they should do. But no, the Lord said, that is the world concept of authority.

My concept of authority is, if you want to be great, serve your brothers and sisters. Serve them as if they were your masters. Now are you willing? More than that, the Lord said, if you want to be first, not only great, but first, you become a bond slave of all.

Not only a servant, now a servant still can have his or her say. And if you are not willing, you can quit. But a bond slave has no right whatsoever.

If you want to be the first among your brothers and sisters, then you have to be a bond slave, not only to Christ, but to your brothers and sisters. Now are you willing to be slaves of your brothers and sisters? But that's what it is. That's where authority lies.

It is in serving. The Lord said, I do not come to be served, but to serve. Now who serves most? Our Lord Jesus.

He serves us to the extent, not only washing our feet, but he serves us to the extent of giving up his life a ransom. That is how he serves. And that is why he is great.

Why he is the first. That is why he has authority over us. The one who serves has authority over those whom he serves.

That is the nature of authority. And then, fifthly, authority is in love. I mentioned last night that we often think that love and authority are incompatible.

If there is love, there should be no authority exercised. In other words, if you really love, then you let them do anything they like to. Whether it's right or wrong, whether it pleases you or not, because you love, love, love, love, therefore, love.

Do nothing. No discipline, no authority, nothing. No order.

That's love. And then on the other hand we think of authority. What is authority? Now authority is force.

Forcing people to do what they do not want to do. Demanding. That's authority.

Now of course, if that's the concept of love and authority, they are incompatible. But dear brothers and sisters, God is love. And God is authority.

Love is nature. Authority is his manifestation, his right. These two things do not contradict.

These two things go together. I will even dare to say that love is authority. Authority is love.

Sacrificial love. Giving to serve the good of the others. Now if this is authority, isn't it love? If you really love, there must be discipline.

You cannot discipline if there is no authority. So you find that this matter of love and authority are really joined together. Authority has to be exercised in love.

And love must chastise. You remember Hebrews chapter 12? Our Heavenly Father chastises us because he loves us as his sons. If he does not chastise us, then we are bastards.

We are not sons. Therefore, authority of love cannot be divorced. They are together.

That is the very nature of authority. Now brothers and sisters, do we now understand what authority really is? In understanding authority, we understand God? Well, we have to move on. I would like to stay there because I feel it is something that has to get across.

Now what is the purpose of authority? Why authority? We say that God is the creator of the universe. He created the world by the word of his power. His word not only has power, but has authority.

You know there is a difference between authority and power. Authority is the right to exercise power. And power is the ability to do things.

The word of God has not only power, but the word of God has authority. He says it and it is done. He speaks a word and the thing was done.

Because his word is full of authority and full of power. And not only he framed the world by the word of his power, but you find even this whole world subsists today by his word. After he created the universe, he used his authority to bring this world into order.

So everything today as God created was put in order under his government, under his authority. Then there was no chaos, no disorder. Everything will go as he desires.

Now unfortunately, his authority was challenged. When his authority was unchallenged, the universe that he created was in perfect order. Not only the physical, but even the spiritual were in perfect order.

Not only all the stars will revolve in their orbits as God has ordained, but even the angelic beings they will minister unto God as they were assigned. Everything was in perfect order. Because his authority sustained that order.

But unfortunately one day that order, that authority was challenged. Lucifer, the archangel, probably the first created angel. God put him in the highest position, aside from God himself, an anointed cherub.

If we may use this metaphor, he is the cherub that stands behind the throne of God, nearest to God, full of wisdom, given wisdom and skill, and given dominion, rule, power. But unfortunately, he got proud. He wanted to be equal with God.

Now who is equal with God? The beloved son. And that is not something to be grasped at, because he is God. But for Lucifer, trying to be equal with God, he was trying to grasp something that did not belong to him.

And because of this rebelling you will find there was, the world was thrown into disorder. You will find everything was in ruin, in emptiness, purposeless. It was covered, and God repaired the earth, bring it back to order, and give dominion to man, to rule over all the things created.

But unfortunately, man again sinned, and threw this world again into curse. We are still living in this cursed world. Now it is because of what had happened in pre-historical time, and what has happened in historical time.

That is the reason of why our concept of authority becomes negative. In other words, whenever we think of authority, we think of overthrowing, overturning, punishment, judgment. That is authority.

But brothers and sisters, in the beginning it was not so. What is the purpose of authority? The apostle Paul again and again said, the authority that God has given to me is for building up, not for overthrowing. Do you hear this? Of the basic purpose, or the fundamental meaning of authority, is to build up.

It is very positive, very beautiful, very glorious, not for overthrowing. So in other words, authority has twofold meaning. One is positive, which is primary, original, for building up.

And one is negative, secondary, it is overthrowing. There can be no building up without authority. What builds up the church? Two things, life and authority.

And these two things are one. If there is no authority, there can be no building up. Why? Because everybody wants to have his or her own will, own way.

Now how can you build brothers and sisters together if that is the case? It is like the children of Israel at the time of the judges. You find that in the time of the judges, the Holy Spirit gave a comment at the very end of chapter 21 verse 25, commented on the whole hundreds of years of history of the children of Israel in Canaan. And said, there was no king in Israel, and everyone does what looks good in his eye.

There was no building up. Why? Because there was no king, no authority. In order to build up, you need authority to build up, to join people together.

Our Lord Jesus said, I will build my church upon this rock, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. Now when did he say that? He said that after Peter confessed, you are the Christ, the son of the living God. As the son of the living God, he has authority.

As the Christ, the sent one of God, who came to accomplish that work of redemption. And because of his obedience to the Father, he was given authority. He not only had authority as God, but he was given authority as the son of man, as Christ.

God had made him Christ and Lord. And brothers and sisters, it is because he has authority, therefore, he said, I will build my church. We think of the great commission in Matthew 28.

Go ye and disciples of the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and teach them all the things I have enjoined you, and I will be with you until the end of the ages. The great commission. Now how can the church accomplish this great commission? Not only evangelizing the world, but discipling the nations.

Now how can you disciple without discipline? How can you discipline without authority? Now where is the authority? In the verse before that, the Lord said, all authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth. Now the word there is not power. That word there in the original is authority.

All authority has been given to me, the Lord said, in heaven and on earth. Therefore, God, it is on that authority that we are able to disciple the nations, teach them all the things that God has enjoined us, prepare the kingdom for the king. It is.

So dear brothers and sisters, authority is something to be welcomed, because without authority there can be no building up. If the Lord has not authority over your life, do you think your spiritual life will build up? Where two or three are gathered together unto my name, there am I in the midst of them. What does it mean? Two or three are gathered together unto my name.

The name that is above every name. To that name every knee shall bow. Everything confess that Jesus is Lord.

It is that authority. When we put ourselves under his name, that is under his authority, then his presence is there. And it is his presence that builds the church.

Nothing more glorious than when you really see what authority is and what it does. How foolish we are to despise authority, thinking that it is useless. Brothers and sisters, whether it is individual or whether it is a culprit, there can be no building up without authority.

It is authority that builds. Let's welcome it. But then of course, there is the other side.

When authority is rejected, despised, unaccepted, then you find it is for overthrowing. Now even with overthrowing, it is for the purpose of a building. Not just overthrow.

Our God is very positive, never negative. Even in overthrowing, it is for the purpose of building up. Now he cannot build.

Why? Because there is opposition. There is resistance. And this resistance has to be overturned.

Has to be taken away, taken aside. And in doing that, you find overthrowing. So there will be judgment.

There will be. But remember again, this is a by-product, secondary, not primary. If you really see authority, there is nothing to be afraid of.

But it is something to look for, because it builds you up. But if there is rebellion in your heart, then authority is a terrible thing. Because God does not allow his authority to be challenged.

Well, what is our response to authority? I think if we really know what the nature of authority is, and what authority does, then I think it is quite natural for us to see that our response to authority is nothing less than obedience. Obedience is the natural response to authority. There is nothing that pleases God more than listening to him.

Obedience is better than sacrifice. Our brother is going to talk a lot about obedience, so I am not going to dwell in it. Just mention it.

And that is, you find that nothing pleases God than obedience. And obedience is the natural response. Unfortunately, we are willing to give God everything and anything except obedience.

We are willing to give him sacrifice, lots of them. Fat or rams. But we do not want to listen to him, nor to obey him.

But look at our Lord Jesus. What an obedient son. As God, he knew no obedience.

Because you cannot connect obedience with God. He is God. He obeys nobody.

We try to make him obey us, but you cannot do that. He is God. But he learned obedience when he was on earth, as a man, the son of man.

He learned obedience through the things which he suffered. He suffered. Obedience is a hard lesson, even with our Lord when he was on earth, because he has a perfect soul.

In other words, there was no sin in him. There was no rebellion in him. But he was a man.

He has his will. A perfect will. Sinless will.

And yet, even he had to learn obedience through the things which he suffered. How he denied himself. So our Lord is our perfect example.

Not only an example, but, as Hebrews says, not only he learned obedience through the things which he suffered, but because he has learned the lesson, he has become our eternal, the original of our eternal salvation. In other words, he is not only the example of obedience, he also gives us the life of obedience. But anyway, I would like to mention this.

To God, because he is the perfect authority, therefore to him we render absolute obedience and absolute submission. Now, obedience is an act. Submission is an attitude.

So to God, we need to give him absolute attitude of submission. No quarreling with him. We need to give him absolute obedience.

No rebellion against him. But of course, with man, when God put man over us to represent his authority, then to them, we should give absolute submission. As long as we are under, but not absolute.

Because to obey God, rather than obey man. That is what it should be. So brothers and sisters, again I say, if any person who misrepresents God's authority, and it so happens that God put you under his authority, then you can render absolute submission, but you do not need to give absolute obedience.

You have to obey God. Maybe we will talk about this more later on. But anyway, the way to authority is through obedience.

Our Lord Jesus, because how he emptied himself and become obedient even to death, and the death of the cross, God has highly exalted him, and given him a name that is above every name. So in other words, the way to authority is through obedience. Finally, what are the indispensable signs of those who know authority? If you have read the spirit of authority by our dear brother Watchman Lee, you find he mentioned a few things.

Brothers and sisters, authority is something that we need to recognize. We need to know. Not knowing authority is a great defect in our spiritual life.

Not only a defect, an obstacle, a hindrance. So we need to know authority, recognize authority, and there are five indispensable signs. Number one, wherever you go, try to find authority to submit.

You know, if we go anywhere, and all we are looking for is who will submit to me, we do not know what authority is. But if you really know what authority is, wherever you go, when you are with your brothers and sisters, you are looking for authority that is God's authority that you can submit. Because it is the most pleasant thing.

Now that is a sure sign that you know authority. Number two, if you really know authority, you will be tender and soft. People do not know authority are hard people.

Number three, people who know authority never want to be authority. You never want to be authority. How much more blessed to submit to authority than to be authority.

Because the responsibility is too great. We will mention that later. So you never want to be in authority.

That shows you know what authority is. Number four, if you really know what authority is, you won't talk too much. Somehow authority shuts your mouth up.

It is very true. You know, if you really know what authority is, lots of murmuring stops, lots of talking stops. It is very true.

And finally, number five, if you really know what authority is, then all you desire is to love and to serve and to give. So may the Lord help us. Shall we pray? Dear Heavenly Father, we do feel that we are standing on holy ground because Thou art the authority of the universe and we are under Thy authority.

Lord, we do pray that by Thy grace we may be a people who know Thy authority, not only to submit and to obey, but even by Thy mercy to represent Thy authority. Lord, we do acknowledge that we are disqualified, neither in obedience nor in authority. Only Thy grace, Thy mercy can make us so.

So we just again humble ourselves before Thee. We want to tremble at Thy word and let Thy word really touch our hearts that we may repent and return to Thy original thought of authority. Make it a reality among Thy people.

We ask in Thy precious name.

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