

# Apostolic Authority Protects the Church

by Zac Poonen

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**Scripture:** Romans 13:1, Acts 20:28, Revelation 2:4, Hebrews 13:12, 1 Peter 4:11, Matthew 18:3, 1 Corinthians 1:27, James 4:7, 1 Timothy 6:17, Matthew 6:24

**Topics:** "Submission to Authority", "Maintaining Fervent Love for Jesus"

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## Description

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## Transcript

The first time in my life where I've heard that submission to authority is like having ice cream. In the world, it's exactly the opposite. See we submit to authority on the roads by driving on the proper side of the road, obeying traffic signs, not going into one-way streets, listening to the police, following speed limits.

It's authority, authority everywhere. And that's more out of fear of being caught. It's not like tasting ice cream, it's not something we rejoice in.

And we submit to authority in the office because otherwise we lose our job and we won't be able to take care of our families. Because every family, every father wants his child to submit to authority in the home. Otherwise they know that it'll be chaos in the home if every child does what they like.

We don't give, in a family, we don't give one vote to every human being, only two votes, father and mother. And even if there are 10 children, they don't have a vote. And we recognize authority everywhere, but unfortunately throughout the world, recognizing authority in the church is a rare thing.

So when I hear a brother saying in a church that it's like tasting ice cream, it really, I believe God will bless that church. So I said, when you don't have mature brothers to guide a church, you must be willing to listen

to a video. I don't believe video messages are the best.

It's second best. But if you don't have mature brothers to guide the church, video messages are the best. See for example, Paul says in Acts chapter 20, to the elders in Ephesus, he says in verse 31, Acts 20 verse 31, be on the alert.

Remember that night and day, for a period of three years, I never stopped admonishing each one of you with tears. Paul spoke with compassion, there were tears in his heart, in his eyes, when he preached because he was burdened. And what a wonderful church it was in Ephesus, you know, it's a place where so many people burnt all their black magic stuff and thousands of dollars worth of stuff was burnt up.

And it was a wonderful church. But it was because Paul exercised authority and night and day he preached for three years. Have you counted that? In one year itself, it says night and day for three years, one year itself, it becomes 700 messages at least in three years and more than 2000 messages.

Can you imagine sitting and listening to 2000 messages by the Apostle Paul? Boy, I would have loved to, and if he was not available, I'd have been glad to watch those 2000 videos of Paul's. If ever there was a recording there of that, I would have loved to see. But I think these people did not value it.

And that's why it says earlier on that some people, after I leave, verse 29, Paul is about to leave. In fact, it says in verse 37, they embraced him and said goodbye to him. But he says, I know that after I leave, verse 29, wolves are going to come in.

What were the wolves doing all this time? They were scared. They were scared because there was a man with spiritual authority, one man kept the wolves out. They were scared of this man because he was a man of God and the devil was afraid of him.

But he says, I know that once I leave, you guys, verse 30, will want to get everybody to listen to you. Your message is more important. And you want to draw away your disciples to your side, and you want the other fellow wants to draw to his side, the other fellow wants to draw his side.

And the wolves, verse 29, will not spare the flock. Who wins finally? The devil. So he asked these wolves, why didn't you go in all these years? He was scared of one man.

We could not touch this church when he was there. We knew that he wouldn't be there forever. He'll leave, that'll be our opportunity.

These things are written for our instruction. And you know what happened? A few years later, the same church, Revelation chapter 2, to the leader of the church in Ephesus, write this, verse 5, remember from where you have fallen. Do you remember where you were in the days Paul was here? I'm just paraphrasing that.

You remember those three years when Paul was with you? Where are you today? Yeah, you still have, verse 2, a lot of toil and perseverance, and you don't tolerate evil men, and you test false apostles, and verse 3, you have perseverance, and you have endured for my name's sake, you have not grown weary, all that is wonderful, but you don't love me fervently like you did when Paul was around. He taught you to love me. He taught you to hate the world.

He taught you to live in fervent devotion to me, but you've lost all that. And if you've lost that, what's the use of all your perseverance and right doctrine and exposing false apostles? It's all worthless. What do I want from you? All this doctrinal accuracy or fervent love for me? And he says, see from where you have fallen, verse 5. Where were you, fervently loving Jesus? Now you have doctrinal tests for people, and activity, and so many things, and many, many good things.

You're able to expose Paul's teaching and all that, but the Lord says, in my eyes, you're fallen. Lord, is this a serious defect? It is so serious, verse 5, that if you don't repent, repent means come back to your first love. I'm going to remove the lampstand, verse 5. That means I will de-recognize you as a church.

You'll function still. All your 500 people will sit there saying, we are the church started by Paul, but it'll only be a name. The presence of the Lord would have departed.

Yeah, you have some good qualities, verse 6. You hate the deeds of the negligence, but if you don't repent, I'm going to remove the lampstand means I'm going to de-recognize you as a church. There are hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions of churches in the world today that Jesus Christ has de-recognized. I know it.

I've listened to a lot of that preaching. I've heard a lot of them. I've been to a lot of places in many countries.

The Lord has de-recognized them. The pastors are after money. The preachers are after money.

They don't have the same standards that they're not seeking to walk as Jesus walked. There's nobody there to correct them or rebuke them. But the Lord says in this Ephesus church, verse 7, is there somebody who has a year to hear? Is somebody here still willing to listen? Maybe somebody had the notes of what Paul gave, the messages Paul gave.

They didn't have videos, but they could read those messages that Paul gave when he was there. From those 2,000 messages, maybe some of them had probably taken notes of it and passed it on to the younger people. And maybe they said, we want that.

And then I wished they could have had a video of Paul preaching and said, we were not here then. We were not alive when he was here. But if you're here to hear that message, if you overcome, I will grant you, verse 7, the need of the tree of life.

So the overcomers, and supposing, I think, like Paul predicted, this elder's backslidden The Lord says, I'll remove the landslide, means I will de-recognize you as a church, means the Lord's presence, where two or three are gathered together in my name, there I am in the midst, was no longer there. Nominally, they were coming in the name of Christ, but Jesus was not there. Like thousands and hundreds of thousands of churches today, they're not worshipping in the name of Allah or Buddha or anything.

They're worshipping in the name of Christ, but Christ is not there. These overcomers sensed Jesus has left this church. Not everybody sensed it, maybe less than 5%.

Our Savior, whom we love, is not here anymore. It's just people preaching doctrines. So some of them, maybe 5, 10 of them, decide to leave, the overcomers, and they meet separately in somebody's house.

And this 500-member church speaks of these heretics, these rebels who left the church and gone, but that's the real church. Jesus has moved there. He's not in this big institution with this grand building and the cross on top of it.

He's not there. Jesus is there, and they're having a wonderful time in the presence of the Lord. Okay, they're called heretics and false teachers and all that, but with all that reproach, they've gone outside the camp, bearing the reproach of Christ.

This is how churches have been built throughout the centuries, where they've drifted from the faith of the apostles. And some people had the boldness to break away from the majority and start anew. If you read the history of the churches, I've read church history written by people who speak about the groups that came out, The Torch of the Testimonies, one of the books like that.

The Pilgrim Church, these are the two books that refer to how throughout the years little groups have come out. It's been a tremendous encouragement for people to see how throughout God has never left himself without a witness. That's the word we read in scripture.

He will not leave himself without a witness. He's always been, throughout these 2000 years, he's always been a witness to the true gospel. And it's not in these big institutions with steeples and chairs and, I mean, crosses and all that, no.

It's not being with the people with the robes and titles like Reverend and Right Reverend and all that, no. It's being with humble people who had no titles, no robes, meeting in some hut or some part of the way, place, some small house, maybe starting with five, 10 people and permanently seeking to follow the teaching of the apostles who went to the scriptures and got the spirited scriptures who were filled with the Holy Spirit and taught overcoming, overcoming what? Overcoming sin, overcoming the flesh, overcoming the world, overcoming the devil. And these were the overcomers who built the church.

That is how CFC started. We're not the only ones. I'm sure there are many, many other groups.

We don't know them. One day we will see them in glory. But what I say is, CFC is now 48 years old, based in Bangalore.

Some of these other places, not so long. But the tendency in human nature is towards backsliding. It's not towards heaven, it's towards the earth.

It's like gravity. Gravity doesn't lift you up, pulling you down. You have to fight it.

If you want to swim, you can't relax for one minute in the pool or in an ocean. You drown if you don't fight gravity all the time. If you're in the middle of the sea, you stop fighting, you drown.

You can't stop fighting for one moment. Brothers, that is our calling. And especially in the day in which we are living, there's such a tremendous pull downwards.

And if you go down, your children will go down with you. That'll be the tragedy. You cannot afford to sink.

Your families will sink. The big responsibility on you. I take it very seriously.

I don't care how many people get offended with my preaching. I've always had a reputation for offending people. People call me sarcastic or people call me hard.

I don't care what they call me. I know my calling. I know what God has told me to do.

And one day when I stand before him, I want to say, Lord, I finished what you told me to do. I couldn't care less what people thought about it. Preserve your church and purity.

Your increasing in numbers counts for zero in God's eyes. Don't be excited that your numbers have grown. The church in Ephesus got excited that we are now 500 people.

What does it mean if the Lord says that fervent love you had for me is gone? That simple devotion to Christ, that's what we've got to preserve. Not only in the church. The church will be preserved if you preserve it yourself as elders.

I'll tell you honestly, I have zero interest in preserving my reputation. God is my witness. Zero.

Many times I go before the Lord and say, Lord, I want to follow John the Baptist. He's been my hero for years. Example, who said he must increase.

I must decrease. I want to decrease in the eyes of men. I want to decrease.

There are enough number of people on YouTube who call me a heretic. All types of things. It's okay.

We go outside the camp bearing the reproach of Christ. I never want to be inside the camp getting the honor of people. I always want to be outside the camp bearing the reproach of Christ.

I know what happens. Many people, they continue like that, but 30, 40 years later, they're inside the camp. Or the church itself has become part of inside the camp.

We have to be outside the camp bearing the reproach of Christ. That's what it says in Hebrews 13. Let us go outside the camp bearing his reproach.

Dear brothers, let me say the moment you begin to seek honor in the world or in Christendom, you're doomed. Be willing to go with Jesus outside the camp. We don't want any of the honor of this world or of Christendom.

We want Jesus Christ to approve of us. Many times I go to the Lord in the night. Sometimes I cry out to the Lord when I wake up at night.

Lord, can you save me? This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased. Am I backsliding somewhere? My brothers will not tell me. They respect me too much.

You tell me. I live before God's face. I urge you, you who are elders.

Your church members won't come and tell you you're backsliding. But you know if you're backsliding in your thought life. You know if you're backsliding in the way you speak to your wife at home.

You know if you're backsliding in your devotion to Jesus Christ. Where something else becomes more important to you. Maybe your job, your profession, maybe money has become more important to you.

Money is the biggest enemy of God. Jesus said that. So I tell you, I fight that battle myself.

I have all my life from the time I quit my job. Even when I was in the Navy. I said Lord I want to fight against money because I earned so much as a Naval Officer.

I don't want to love it. And one day when I quit the Navy, I gave everything away for God's work. And quit with zero in my bank account.

And from that day till today, I've never asked a single person for money. Never said a prayer letter. God has provided my needs.

And I've always been happy with whatever I've got. Never wanting more. Lord you decide how much I want.

I live with that. If you give me more, I accept it. If you give me less, I accept it.

Perfectly okay. But I know that money is the enemy of God. Not Satan.

Satan cannot trap me. I know clearly. Money can trap me.

Because we live in a society where they throw around money so lavishly. They're not disciplined in the use of it. They have so much and they think I can throw it around.

Yeah, I'm not here to judge anybody. But I know when it says here you have left your first love. How do I leave my first love? Not by watching pornography.

I've never watched pornography on my phone or my computer. That's not how I drift. The only enemy of God is money.

Wanting comfort. That's why I talked about fasting. That means disciplining myself not to waste my time or money in unnecessary pursuits.

Now, don't take me to an extreme. I'm not teaching a Spartan religion. I believe when you have children, we must provide some entertainment for them.

Definitely. Take them to places where they like to see and don't think only of your interest. Think of your children as much as you can afford within your income.

By all means, take them different places and let them be happy. Children must grow up happy that we're not living in a rigid Spartan culture. It says here in 1 Timothy 6, verse 17.

Those who are rich, many of you are rich in this present world. What does it say? It doesn't tell you to be Spartan. Don't fix your hope on riches which are uncertain, but fix your hope on God.

Why does God give you so much money? You believe the Bible says this? Verse 17, to enjoy. God's given you money to enjoy. Your children must enjoy what you have.

He's given it to us richly, all things to enjoy. So I'm not teaching a Spartan disciplined type of mind, no. But don't become a slave to it.

That's all I'm saying. Don't become a slave. Make Christ central in your life.

And keep listening to messages that challenge you towards devotion to Christ. Most important, explanation, doctrine, and order. Why did, I often think of this, why did God leave the world, Christian world, without printed Bibles in everybody's hand for 1,500 years after Christ? Have you ever thought of that? How, what an advantage.

We're talking about different translations. Leave alone different translations, they didn't even have one translation for 1,500 years. Only a few people had it.

Those who could afford these expensive parchments on which Bible is handwritten. I mean, if I were in God's place, this is how foolish I would be. Shows that God is not as foolish as me.

I would have allowed printing, which was discovered in the late 15th century, to be discovered three centuries before Christ. Because then by the time Paul wrote his letter, it would be printed. And it could be distributed.

Everybody would have, every church would have umpteen copies of Paul's print, episodes in printed form. Oh, what a wonderful thing it would be. Every church, every person come to the meeting in the first century, they've all got a Bible in their hand.

And an all-wise God did not allow printing to be discovered till 1,500, 1470 or something like that, when the first Bible was printed. Have you thought of that? What did Jesus mean when he said, man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from God's mouth, they don't even have a Bible. Because he's not talking about the printed word there.

Proceeds, present continuous tense. The word that not proceeded from the mouth of John or Mark or Matthew, that proceeds from the mouth of God now, that is the Holy Spirit. What those early Christians had was the Holy Spirit.

What many Christians today have is a printed Bible. Various translations and various paraphrases. They had more.

I tell you they had more. Because they didn't have this printed thing. They didn't have any paraphrase or translation.

They were dependent on the Holy Spirit. They wanted Spirit of God speak to me, speak to me early morning. And they didn't have a Bible to open.

And they became more sensitive to the Holy Spirit. I want to live like that. Every morning when I get up, I want to be sensitive.

Spirit of God, what are you trying to tell me today? Sometimes it's one word. I do turn to the Bible because I have it. But I want to hear.

I want to hear. Lord, open my ear like you opened Jesus' ear when he was on earth. Dear brothers, I urge you to do that.

It will help you. It will help your family life. And it will protect your family.

God's word protects us from so many wrong things. It will help your church. Very important to hear.

See this amazing word in 1 Peter. It's a very challenging word for any of you who preach and all of you preach. Okay, listen to this word and see if it doesn't make you fall on your face with your mouth in the dust.

1 Peter 4, 11. Whoever speaks, whoever preaches God's word, all of you preach God's word. Whoever preaches, speak as one who is speaking the very utterance of God.

It's like the Old Testament prophets. As if God himself is speaking through your mouth. I read that and I put my face on the ground.

Lord, how in the world can you do that? And if you serve, serve by the strength God supplies, not with your human cleverness. And so that people will not think about you at the end of it. They will glorify God through Jesus Christ.

So it says that when people are finished hearing your preaching, do they glorify God through Jesus Christ? Or do they say, boy, what a clever presentation that was. Of this very difficult truth, this man presented it so cleverly. And you gloat in that.

We need more to put our face in the dust. Because we are so educated. We are so clever.

I remember as a young Christian, when I started preaching, and I read in Matthew 11, the Lord saying, I praise you, Father, in Matthew 11, 25, Lord of heaven and earth. You have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent, and have revealed them to infants. Revelation by God is given to infants, or those who have the spirit of a baby.

Not the mind of a baby. It says in 1 Corinthians 14, don't be children in your understanding. No, we don't want to be children in our understanding.

But in our heart, in the head, we must be men. In the heart, when revelation comes, we must be like children. And cleverness and intelligence is not something we acquire.

We are born with it. Any doctor will tell you. If your parents were brilliant, you got that from them.

No credit to you. If the parents were dumb, the children usually come out dumb. So, I say, Lord, I said this many times, Lord, unfortunately, I was born intelligent.

I did well in the military academy. What do I do? Can't I get revelation? You said it's hidden from the wise and intelligent. The Lord said, you have a greater opportunity to deny yourself and become a babe than that dumb person who already knows nothing.

You have to fight a battle to become a babe. And that will strengthen you. That other person is already intellectually dumb.

He doesn't have to fight a battle. He comes and sits here and says, I can't understand. I heard a joke once of an illiterate man who knew very little English.

Somebody asked him years ago when there was only King James Version. Somebody asked him, what is your favorite verse in the Bible? If you read King James Version, one of the most frequent expressions that comes in the King James Version is, and it came to pass. It just means this is the next thing that happened.

And it came to pass this, and it came to pass this. So he said, my favorite verse is, and it came to pass. It wasn't the rest of the verse.

No, just that much. And it came to pass. How does that bless you? He says, I'm a poor man.

I go through many trials. And whenever I come to a trial, I hear that word. This trial will not stay.

It came to pass. So I'm encouraged. See how God can use a word like that to bless a person.

I've never forgotten that. God can speak. And I say, Lord, I want you to speak to this intelligent man.

Make me like a babe when I come to scripture. This is how I discovered the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Clever people have so many arguments.

This is how I began to speak in tongues. Clever people have so many arguments. This is how I understood how the church can be built as a body.

This is how I understood about family life. This is how I understood that we can bring up our children in godly ways. And this is how I had faith to believe that everything in scripture is possible.

That there's nothing that's written in scripture that's not possible for us. It may take time to work, but it will work. And if I have the patience to wait for it.

And there are some things in scripture, like, I think it was Tozer who said, the most profound word in scripture is what, when the Lord asked Ezekiel, can these dead bones live? He said, Lord, only you know. There are some things when you come to scripture, you say, Lord, only you know. So there are things like that in our life as we come to scripture also.

Lord, I can't understand that, only you know. I'm willing to accept that. I don't know everything.

So a child is willing to accept that. I don't know. And a child will not be able to argue.

We can argue like a lawyer, an attorney. A child can't do that. It's not by argument that we prove something to a person from scripture.

If God does not give them light to see it, all your attorney type of arguments will not convince them. We have to be like a little child. So I just share these thoughts with you.

And we come together to bless one another.

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