

CHAPTER SIX

KINGDOM AUTHORITY

One cannot speak of government without addressing the issue of authority. In a republic or a democracy, ultimate authority lies with the people. The Constitution of the United States uses the separation of power to protect the people from authoritarianism. Ideally, the congress was to make the laws, the courts were to judge or interpret the laws, and the executive branch, the president, was to enforce the laws. However, in a kingdom ultimate authority rests exclusively with the king. *“For the Lord is our judge, the Lord is our lawgiver, the Lord is our king; He will save us.”*¹ As citizens of the Kingdom we are called to understand and embrace Kingdom authority.

Jesus has been given all authority.² Yet, He has chosen to rule through delegated authority. He has all authority, and he can delegate it to whomever He chooses. As I mentioned, first means first: then so does all mean all. Jesus Christ is not only the King of heaven; He is the King of earth, not just in the future, but today. He received that authority from His Father. Still, Jesus is also under authority. In His own ministry, Jesus primarily focused upward. His Father was the One who had sent Him. He positioned and postured Himself under and toward His Father. He always took his prompts and cues from His Father. Jesus stated clearly, that He did nothing of His own initiative.³ He spoke what He heard his Father speak, and He did what He saw his Father do. Jesus understood that His authority was related to His mission. Because of this, let us look at some of the ramifications related to the authority of Jesus.

First, whenever and wherever we encounter God, we will meet His authority. Humble submission is the only appropriate attitude and the sole sane and legitimate response to encountering God. The Greek word for submission is *‘hupotasso’*, which translates to arrange under. It is primarily a military term. Let me distinguish between submission and obedience. Submission is an attitude or posture of heart, while obedience is an action. It is possible for one to obey without being submitted. What’s more, one can be submitted, and not obey. Certainly, if one is asked by an authority to do that which is unethical, illegal, immoral or unscriptural, that person should humbly decline doing so.

¹ Isaiah 33:22

² Matthew 28:18

³ John 8:28

A second principle to take into consideration is that God has chosen to rule through delegated authority. God chose Paul to be the apostle to the Gentiles. His task included helping the gentile society, heavily influenced by Hellenistic philosophy, to restructure its thinking from democracy to a Kingdom mentality. To do this Paul taught kingdom order in the marriage, the family and the work place. In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul addressed the issue of authority in relationships at every level. His desire was for people to have a functional understanding of Kingdom authority. Paul gave us insight into where we should look to take our cues, as people under authority. Since God rules through delegated authority, our submission to delegated authority is equivalent to our submission to God. I contend that whenever there are two or more people together, one of them is in authority; e.g., by age, by maturity, by rank, by anointing or by consent. There is always a first among equals. God is a God of order, of rank and therefore of authority. Having this in mind there are at least four arenas where we are regularly apt to encounter God's delegated authority.

First, God's authority is expressed in civil government. Paul wrote, *"Let every person be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and God establishes those, which exist. Therefore he who resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves."*⁴ Peter, added, *"Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority, or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right."*⁵ However, what should our posture be if the civil officials are corrupt and unjust? Peter wrote, *"Servants, be submissive to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and gentle, but also to those who are unreasonable. For this finds favor, if for the sake of conscience toward God a man bears up under sorrows when suffering unjustly."*⁶ The Greek word for unreasonable is 'skolios,' meaning crooked. Remember however, submission is a posture of humility of heart.

Second, God's authority is present in the home. Since God has ordained family to be the building block for society, it is important that each family understands the rule of God in the home. Paul taught the following order for family life: *"Wives, be subject to your own husbands,*

⁴ Romans 13:1-2

⁵ 1 Peter 2:13-14

⁶ 1 Peter 2:18-19

as to the Lord.”⁷ He then required that “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her...”⁸ To the children he wrote, “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.”⁹ As I mentioned earlier, Christianity is rooted Judaism. The Judaic model is patriarchal, which means the father is to lead the family. Regarding the central position of the father in the Biblical model for family Paul also wrote, “For this reason, I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name...”¹⁰ It was assumed that as the father went the family would go also. In fact, the original promise made to Abram in Genesis was not simply to bless individuals, but rather to “bless all the families of the earth.”¹¹ Joshua spoke for his family when he said, “... as for me and my house (or family), we will serve the Lord.”¹² Historically, the responsibility of the father to lead the family was recognized, understood and generally accepted. When the Philippian jailer asked what he must do to be saved, Paul and Silas said, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you shall be saved, you and your household.”¹³ The word household is translated from the Greek word oikos, which also means family.

Third, God’s authority is found in the work place. Let me mention a few facts about the importance of the work place in the Bible. The Hebrew word for work is ‘avodah’, which is the root word for work, worship and worth. The Hebrew word “work” is mentioned more than 800 times in the Bible, which is more often than the all the words used to express worship, music, praise and singing combined. Of the 132 public appearances of Jesus mentioned in the New Covenant, 122 were in the marketplace. Of the 52 parables told by Jesus, 45 referred to business or work. Of the 40 divine interventions in the book of Acts, 39 took place in the market arena. Not one of the twelve disciples called by Jesus was a religious leader. The Bible indicates that Jesus spent the first thirty years of His life as a carpenter. Paul wrote, “Slaves [employees], in all things obey those who are your masters [employers] on earth, not with external service, as those who merely please men, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord. Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men; knowing that from the Lord, you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom

⁷ Ephesians 5:22; Colossians 3:18

⁸ Ephesians 5:25; Colossians 3:19

⁹ Ephesians 6:1; Colossians 3:20

¹⁰ Ephesians 3:14-15

¹¹ Genesis 12:3

¹² Joshua 24:15

¹³ Acts 16:31

you serve. For he who does wrong will receive the consequences of the wrong which he has done, and that without partiality.”¹⁴ Since God ordained work even before the fall, He wants His Kingdom to be reflected in the work place.

Fourth, but not listed by importance, we meet God’s authority in the Church. Spiritual authority is one of the ultimate issues of the universe. “Jesus Christ is Lord” is a statement regarding spiritual authority. Although the Church is not the Kingdom, it contains one of the most important analogies to God’s rulership on the earth. Jesus Himself linked the understanding of authority with faith. When Jesus offered to come and heal the centurion’s servant, the centurion said it was not necessary for Him to come, “but just say the word.” The centurion understood how authority functioned. Jesus heard this and was amazed. Notice that Jesus equated the centurion’s understanding of authority with great faith.¹⁵ In the realm of spiritual authority, I hope that we can identify and avoid certain pitfalls. Authentic spiritual authority is rarely imposed. It is most effective only when it is recognized and submitted to voluntarily. The goal and ideal of leadership is ‘to serve’ as an example. One leads by serving, and one serves by leading. This is not double talk. I have always given this caution to people when I speak to them about submitting to spiritual authority. Whenever possible, do not come under the authority of someone who is not under authority.

Experience has shown me that many in the church do not want to submit to authority because they fear its abuses. There are two causes for this fear. First, it is plain that in the home, in the church, and in society there have been abuses of authority. Authority at any level is sometimes abused and misused. Whether this abuse or misuse of authority comes from fathers, church leaders, police officers, or presidents, the effects are often devastating and long lasting. On the other hand, when people refuse to submit to authority, there can be a second and much more surreptitious reason. There are those people who fear the abuse of authority simply because they are aware of how they would use it if they had it. In my experience, those who abuse authority are extremely insecure. This insecurity breeds control and an ‘authoritarian spirit.’ Insecure fathers and leaders feel the need to control all variables. Ironically, one of the major sources for the exploitive misuse of authority comes from those who refuse to be under authority. In a scenario such as this, a leader lacks accountability, and is immune to correction,

¹⁴ Colossians 3:22-25; Ephesians 6:5&9

¹⁵ Matthew 8:5-10

modification or adjustment. Addressing the subject of sonship and fatherhood requires that we come face to face with the issue of authority.

I contend that those of us in leadership should never be overly preoccupied with how our followers view us. Spiritual leaders should never demand such things as admiration, honor, respect and service. For us to insist on these attitudes from others are at best futile and at worst dangerous. A more effective approach is for each of us is to make certain that we guard our own hearts and properly posture ourselves toward the one God has sent and set over us. The life of our Lord Jesus Christ best illustrates this concept. When we conduct ourselves in this manner, we may say, "If you desire to know how a son should relate to his father, watch me."

I have heard Dan Wolfe, my spiritual father, share a teaching that I feel is important for an understanding of authority. With his permission, I have included it below. The following Scripture forms its basis. *"Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee came to Him with her sons, bowing down, and making a request of Him. And He said to her, 'What do you wish?' She said to Him, 'Command that in Your kingdom these two sons of mine may sit, one on Your right and one on Your left.' But, Jesus answered and said, 'You do not know what you are asking for. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink?' They said to Him, 'We are able.' He said to them, 'My cup you shall drink; but to sit on My right and on My left, this is not Mine to give, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared by My Father.' And hearing this, the ten became indignant with the two brothers. But Jesus called them to Himself, and said, 'You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. It is not so among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave.'"*¹⁶ Dan used this passage to differentiate between spiritual authority, and an authoritarian spirit. True spiritual authority must be dominant without being domineering.

The Ambitious Authoritarian Spirit: (Lording over others like Gentiles).

- A. An authoritarian spirit loves to be above everyone, to be first, on top and in control.
- B. He is very demanding and rigid, which causes people to shy away from him.
- C. He is legalistic (holding to the letter of the law), self-defensive, and unwilling to admit error.
- D. He is self-righteous and very seldom shows grace and mercy to others.

¹⁶ Matthew 20:20-27

- E. He uses Scriptures to beat a spouse or people into submission.
- F. He becomes unteachable and unable to hear or receive from others.
- G. He is unwilling to submit to or to serve anyone.
- H. He controls and manipulates people and situations for his own advantage.
- I. He often separates and isolates himself and causes division.
- J. He is gripped by a proud spirit.
- K. He sees authority as something to impose downward on people.

Genuine and Humble Spiritual Authority: (Serving others like Jesus).

- A. He has a servant's heart in all situations.
- B. He is willing to do any menial task.
- C. He never demands obedience or submission.
- D. He never presses for greater recognition, or a more impressive title.
- E. He always speaks the Word of God into situations impartially.
- F. He is approachable and very easily entreated by others.
- G. He is accountable to others in his daily life.
- H. He shows great grace and mercy to others.
- I. He can submit to authority and be corrected and modified.
- J. He reveals a spirit of humility at all times.
- K. He understands that spiritual authority is recognized and submitted to voluntarily.

In summary, I believe that 'God anoints whom He appoints.' The word 'anti-Christ' can be broken down to mean 'Against the anointing of God.' The current trend in our Western culture to rebel against appointed authority is an ungodly trend.