

LESSON 8 ~ GOD'S DELEGATED AUTHORITY

AUGUST 23, 2020

Background Scripture: Ephesians 1, 5; 6; Romans 13; Acts 20

Lesson Passage: Ephesians 1:20-22; 5:23; 6:1-3; Romans 13:1 (NASB); Acts 20:28 (KJV)

Introduction: Authority is the legitimate power which one person or group possesses and practices over another. The term biblical authority refers to the extent to which commandments and doctrines within the Old and New Testament scriptures are commanding over humans' belief and conduct. Authority always has a hierarchy. That is how it functions. Anyone who accepts the biblical world view understands that one Person alone stands at the pinnacle of the authority pyramid, Jesus the Lord. All other authorities are arranged and systematized by God under Him. There are four realms of authority we must consider: the family, the government, the church, and other institutions, such as the workplace, school, clubs, etc. Wherever we encounter authority, we are instructed to honor and obey it, unless it violates conscience or God's Word. Pretty simple. We do not get to choose which ones are "legitimate" and which are not.

So, what would happen if everyone had the option of deciding what laws and authorities to obey and which ones to ignore? Chaos would rule, as it did in the times before the flood and during the times of the judges in the Bible, when "everyone did what was right in his own eyes."

Scripture Reference: Ephesians 1:20-22 (KJV)

20 Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, 21 Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: 22 And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church.

Scripture Reference: Ephesians 5:23; 6:1-3 (KJV)

23 For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Ephesians 6:1 Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. 2 Honour thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise; 3 That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.

Scripture Reference: Romans 13:1 (NASB)

1 Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God.

Scripture Reference: Acts 20:28 (KJV)

28 Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood

Topic Explored: "God's Delegated Authority" ~ God not only directs us personally, but He also directs us through His delegated authorities. Some examples of people who are delegated authorities are: parents, school teachers, police officers, governmental officials. Since a delegated

authority is a person who represents God's authority, he must be obeyed. To be disrespectful or disobedient to God's delegated authority is like being disrespectful or disobedient to God Himself. From this lesson we are going to learn a very important truth: We must obey God's delegated authorities in order to be fully obedient to God. What is Delegated Authority? A delegated authority is someone who represents God's authority. All authority belongs to God, but God has two ways in which He exercises His authority: Direct authority means that God tells us directly through His Word or through His Spirit what He wants us to do. Delegated authority means that God designates certain people to represent Him and to exercise His authority.

Memory Verses: *22 And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church* (Ephesians 1:22). KJV

Lesson Focus: Ephesians 1:20-22 (KJV)

Verses 20-22 ~ The Bible is very clear on the matter. According to Paul, who was writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, all authority comes from God – the good, the bad, and the ugly. This does not mean that God endorses or gives His stamp of approval to all authority; rather, it means that God is the source of all authority, just as He is the source of life, and that He orders all authority under His sovereign rule. In this world in which we live, God has established basic structures of authority: In our discussion, we will consider three structures of authority.

Lesson Focus: Ephesians 5:23; 6:1-3 (KJV)

Verses 23, 6:1-3 ~ God delegates authority in the home. God delegates authority in marriage. God's arrangement for the family is that the father be the head of the house under God. The wife is to be subject to her husband, and the children subject to their parents. In the family, God has placed His authority in the parents. Since the parents represent God's authority in the home, it is right that they should be obeyed. The Bible says, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right." Ephesians 6:1

The father is the God-appointed head of the family, but he is not to be a dictator. He is to love his wife and children and be an example to them. He is also responsible before God to bring up his children in the ways of the Lord. The Bible says, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it." Ephesians 5:25 "Fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord." Ephesians 6:4

The Bible is very clear that male and female have true equality and worth before God because both are made in His image ("So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them," Genesis 1:27). Yet in the functioning of the home, there is a chain of command: the husband is accountable to God, the wife is submissive to her husband, and the children are to be obedient to their parents. Until children are grown and on their own, they are under their parents' authority. This authority structure is so important to God that He included this "chain of command" in the Ten Commandments and repeated it in the New Testament: "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right" (Ephesians 6:1). It is interesting that this command comes with a promise: "Honor your father and mother, which is the first commandment with a promise, that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth" (Ephesians 6:2-3).

Lesson Focus: Romans 13:1 (NASB)

Verse 1 ~ Due to the sinful and rebellious nature of men, God established laws and set up human government. God gave men the authority to enforce His laws. He did this for our protection and for our good. Civil authorities are God's provision for the restraint of evil in order that we might live "a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty" (1 Timothy 2:2). School teachers, police officers, local officials, judges, state and federal officials are all God's delegated authorities. Since they represent God's authority, we must obey them.

In Romans 12, Paul described what it means to be a living-sacrifice Christian—setting ourselves aside to serve the Lord, each other, and even our enemies in love. Now Paul turns to the issue of how Christians, who are saved by God's grace, should interact with our present governments. He describes the biblical doctrine of submission to human authorities. Again, those in Christ are called to set themselves aside and to trust God to provide what is needed through those in authority, whether good or evil. Paul is clear that this applies to every person. He calls for us to be in submission to government authorities, though he does not say that we must obey them in all cases. Paul and the other apostles refused to obey commands from people in authority to stop preaching the gospel (Acts 5:27–29). They did, however, submit to those in authority in all matters that were not in contradiction to the will of God.

Why should we submit? Paul is clear: Every authority in the world was established by God. This would include, of course, good leaders, evil leaders, and everyone in-between. Paul's instruction here, then, is not about blind nationalism or absolute obedience to men. Rather, it is a recognition that human government—in general—is a legitimate authority, and that Christians cannot use their faith as an excuse for civil lawlessness. God puts all leaders in place for specific reasons. We should remember that Paul is writing this letter to Christians in Rome. The government of Rome ruled much of the known world at the time. It was led by the Emperor Nero from AD 54–68. Nero is famous for his cruel and unfair treatment of Christians, among other groups. We must not assume that Paul is writing these words lightly. He was aware of the implications of his teaching.

All authority on earth comes from the Sovereign of the universe. All authority on the human plane is delegated authority. Paul talks about government authorities, but his statement shows that all authority comes from God. All authority is delegated from God and those in authority are accountable to God. This means that no person, no matter what office he holds, is above rebuke if he strays from the ultimate authority of God's Word. God's plan is that Christ be the Head of every church. Under Christ are God-appointed leaders such as elders, pastors, deacons, and teachers. We are to be subject to God's delegated authorities in the church.

Lesson Focus: Acts 20:28 (KJV)

Verse 28 ~ No matter where Paul ministered, his greatest concern was to preach the gospel of Christ. And so, we discover that in Ephesus as elsewhere, Paul preached boldly in public places and went from house to house testifying to Jew and Gentile alike, of the need of repentance towards God - and faith towards the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul was deeply concerned for the spiritual well-being of all people. The danger into which he placed himself in his endeavor was of little concern to himself. And so, Paul did not deliver a sugar-coated gospel that tickled the ears of the people. Paul preached the whole counsel of God, so that he could stand unashamed before the Lord, knowing that he had fought a good fight, had kept the faith and finished the good work that God had prepared for him to do. But he also knew that after his departure savage wolves would enter the church and not spare God's little flock, and so he encouraged the elders

in Ephesus, (just as he urges church-leaders today) to stand firm in the faith; to guard their spiritual well-being; to care for God's people and to feed the flock of God. And they were also exhorted to: shepherd the Body of Christ, which is the Church - reminding them, (and us) that we were purchased with His own precious blood, on Calvary's cross.

This was the last time that Paul was to see his brothers and sisters in Ephesus; but his warning is as pertinent today as it was when he bid these dear believers farewell. Many wolves have indeed scattered the flock of God. False teachers have indeed tickled the ears of many - and many doctrines of demons have similarly infiltrated the heart of Christendom; but Christ continues to build His Church, often in secret and often without our knowledge; but Paul's admonition still stands today:- that we guard our hearts, stand firm in the faith and take heed of the whole counsel of God.. not only on our own account but in order to protect those whom God has chosen to place in our care.

Let's talk about it. . .

- 1. Why is it important for everyone in authority to remember that he only holds a delegated authority?**
- 2. Although God designed authority for our blessing and protection, He allows a lot of abusive authority to exist. Why would He do this? What can those under such authority learn?**
- 3. When, if ever, is it right to rebel against abusive authority? What biblical guidelines apply?**
- 4. What is the difference between teaching with true biblical authority and teaching with opinionated dogmatism?**

Making it personal:

- The Lord Jesus is our example of what it means to be subject to authority. He was subject, not only to God's direct authority, but also to His delegated authorities. He was subject to His parents, He was subject to governmental authorities, He paid taxes, He was obedient to the laws of the land. Throughout His entire life, the Lord Jesus was subject to authority. He was never rebellious on any occasion. He truly lived His life by the principle of obedience.
- The most important thing we can do to please God is to obey Him. To be fully obedient to the Lord, we must obey His delegated authorities.

Closing Prayer: *Heavenly Father, thank You for the Word of God which is profitable for teaching; rebuking; correcting and training in righteousness. May we individually and collectively be on our spiritual guard, not only for our own well-being but also for those that You have seen fit to place in our lives. Give grace and wisdom to all who are called to be elders or overseers in local churches today, and protect all believers who have fallen prey to false teachers or who have been exposed to doctrines of demons. Protect the hearts and minds of all Your children and guide each one of us into the way of truth - this we ask in Jesus' Name, AMEN.*