

Biblical Authority

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The Believers Authority

The Apostle Paul when writing to the Church at Thessalonica, made this profound statement

“For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work...” 2 Thessalonians. 2:7
Lawlessness hates Authority.

The object of lawlessness is to break down all restraints found in authority. Authority in its different forms brings restrictions and the lawless want to go beyond all restricted boundaries. Therefore lawlessness finds ways to rebel against authority.

Rebellion against Authority

2 Timothy 3:1-9 The New living Translation

“1 You should know this, Timothy, that in the last days there will be very difficult times.

2 For people will love only themselves and their money. They will be boastful and proud, scoffing at God, disobedient to their parents, and ungrateful. They will consider nothing sacred.

3 They will be unloving and unforgiving; they will slander others and have no self-control. They will be cruel and hate what is good.

4 They will betray their friends, be reckless, be puffed up with pride, and love pleasure rather than God.

5 They will act religious, but they will reject the power that could make them godly. Stay away from people like that!

6 They are the kind who work their way into people’s homes and win the confidence of vulnerable women who are burdened with the guilt of sin and controlled by various desires.

7 (Such women are forever following new teachings, but they are never able to understand the truth.)

8 These teachers oppose the truth just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses. They have depraved minds and a counterfeit faith.

9 But they won’t get away with this for long. Someday everyone will recognize what fools they are, just as with Jannes and Jambres”.

This passage of Scripture gives us an insight into the **last days** on the earth, before the second coming of the Lord. Here is a picture of rebellion against the authority given in God’s Word. Paul sums up this thought by making reference to two characters namely, Jannes and Jambres whose names mean “he who seduces” and “he who is rebellious.” Neither name is in the Old Testament, but Jewish legend held that these were the names of two Egyptian magicians who opposed Moses’ demand on Pharaoh to free the Israelites. They tried to duplicate the miracles of Moses in an attempt to discredit him, but God showed that Moses’ authority was more powerful. (Exodus 7:11–12, 22)

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2 Peter 3:3-4 Message Bible

"First off, you need to know that in the last days, mockers are going to have a heyday. Reducing everything to the level of their puny feelings, they'll mock, "So what's happened to the promise of his Coming? Our ancestors are dead and buried, and everything's going on just as it has from the first day of creation. Nothing's changed."

Mockers, men who will *make a mock of sin*, and of salvation from it. God's way of saving sinners by Jesus Christ is what men will scoff at.

When people fail to submit to authority, **this is rebellion**.

2 Peter 2:10 Amplified

"And particularly those who walk after the flesh and indulge in the lust of polluting passion and scorn and despise authority. Presumptuous [*and*] daring [*self-willed and self-loving creatures*]! They scoff at and revile dignitaries (glorious ones) without trembling."

People walking after the flesh; they follow the devices and desires of their own hearts, they give up themselves to the conduct of their own fleshly mind and in their lives, *they are presumptuous or proud, self-willed* and act directly contrary to God's righteous precepts, and comply with the demands of corrupt nature. This kind of person therefore despises *the authority of God*, and we need not wonder why, for they are bold and daring, and obstinate, and will not only cherish contempt in their hearts, but with their tongues will utter slanderous and reproachful words of those *dignitaries* who are set over them.

Note: Numbers 12: 1-15 NSAB

"1 Then Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses because of the Cushite woman whom he had married (for he had married a Cushite woman);
2 and they said, "Has the LORD indeed spoken only through Moses? Has He not spoken through us as well?" And the LORD heard it.

3(Now the man Moses was very humble, more than any man who was on the face of the earth.)

4 Suddenly the LORD said to Moses and Aaron and to Miriam, "You three come out to the tent of meeting." So the three of them came out.

5 Then the LORD came down in a pillar of cloud and stood at the doorway of the tent, and He called Aaron and Miriam. When they had both come forward,

6 He said, "Hear now My words:

If there is a prophet among you, I, the LORD, shall make Myself known to him in a vision I shall speak with him in a dream.

7 "Not so, with My servant Moses, He is faithful in all My household;

8 With him I speak mouth to mouth, Even openly, and not in dark sayings, And he beholds the form of the LORD. Why then were you not afraid to speak against My servant, against Moses?"

9 So the anger of the LORD burned against them and He departed.

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10 But when the cloud had withdrawn from over the tent, behold, Miriam was leprous, as white as snow. As Aaron turned toward Miriam, behold, she was leprous.

11 Then Aaron said to Moses, "Oh, my lord, I beg you, do not account this sin to us, in which we have acted foolishly and in which we have sinned.

12 "Oh, do not let her be like one dead, whose flesh is half eaten away when he comes from his mother's womb!"

13 Moses cried out to the LORD, saying, "O God, heal her, I pray!"

14 But the LORD said to Moses, "If her father had but spit in her face, would she not bear her shame for seven days? Let her be shut up for seven days outside the camp, and afterward she may be received again."

15 So Miriam was shut up outside the camp for seven days, and the people did not move on until Miriam was received again".

Psalm 78:12-22; Luke 23:18-25

It is important to note in 1 Samuel 15:23

"Rebellion is seen as the sin of witchcraft and stubbornness *is* as iniquity and idolatry."

Often we think of failure to submit to authority as a small matter. This is not so, failure to submit to authority is rebellion and it is outright sin. For a child to go against parental authority is seen in the world today as expressing themselves, when this kind of disobedience has its roots in rebellion and insubordination. A child has greater freedom under discipline than in the realm of little or no discipline.

Authority and its Beginnings

The first mention of authority takes place in the Garden of Eden

Genesis 1:26,

*"Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness; let him have **dominion**."* {**Hebrew raw-daw'** to rule, have dominion, dominate, to reign}

Genesis 1:28

"God blessed them; and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and **subdue it** {**Hebrew kaw-bash'** to conquer, bring into subjection}; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth'."

Man created in God's image was placed in sovereignty over the earth.

Genesis Chapter 3

At the fall of man, this sovereignty was lost to Satan who was disguised in the form of a serpent.

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During the time of Christ on the earth there is a confrontation between Christ and Satan, the reference can be found in Luke 4.

Luke 4:6

“And the devil said to Him, “All this authority I will give You, and their glory; for *this* has been delivered to me, and I give it to whomever I wish”.

Here we have Satan’s claim to authority over the earth.

Compare Ephesians 2:2; John 12:31; 1 John 5:19.

Because of this loss of authority God, Himself chose to abide by His own Word. For God to enter the earth He needed to come through the right avenue. Thus He cut a covenant with Abraham, and through this Abrahamic Covenant God had a right to send His only Son Jesus Christ into the world to save mankind.

Genesis 22:15-18 NASB

15 Then the angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time from heaven,
16 and said, "By Myself I have sworn, declares the LORD, because you have done this thing and have not withheld your son, your only son,
17 indeed I will greatly bless you, and I will greatly multiply your seed as the stars of the heavens and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your seed shall possess the gate of their enemies.

18 "In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice."

The Lord Jesus Christ was the promised seed through Abraham and through His death and resurrection, has taken back that rightful authority.

Colossians 2:13-15 NASB

“13 When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions,
14 having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.

15 When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him”.

Matthew 28:18

“And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth”.

That authority is now placed in the hands of the Church, given by the Lord Jesus so that the Body of Christ can carry out its given duty. “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations.” Compare

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Mark 16:15-18; 13:32-37; 2 Corinthians 10:8,14

This authority can only operate when believers meet the requirement set down by the Word of God. Matthew 8:5-10

It is absolutely imperative that we understand this Biblical Principle, which is: “to have authority in the kingdom of God we must be under authority”, to do this we need to understand Biblical Authority. Submission to human authorities reflects our submission to God’s authority.

Romans 13:1-2;

“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.

2 Therefore whoever resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves”.

Acts 23:1-5

“1 Paul, looking intently at the Council, said, "Brethren, I have lived my life with a perfectly good conscience before God up to this day."

2 The high priest Ananias commanded those standing beside him to strike him on the mouth.

3 Then Paul said to him, "God is going to strike you, you whitewashed wall! Do you sit to try me according to the Law, and in violation of the Law order me to be struck?"

4 But the bystanders said, "Do you revile God's high priest?"

5 And Paul said, "I was not aware, brethren, that he was high priest; for it is written, 'YOU SHALL NOT SPEAK EVIL OF A RULER OF YOUR PEOPLE'."

Thus the Study of Biblical Authority:

Authority come in all different Forms

There are three major Institutions described in the Word of God. They are the **home** the **church** and the **government**. All three were instituted by God. They are in fact God’s authority on the face of the earth. Any rebellion against these institutions is to be taken seriously, for it would be a clear rebellion against God Himself.

1.) The Home

Genesis 2:23-25

Here is the first institution mentioned in the Word of God. The institution of the ordinance of marriage was **given for the preservation of the world of mankind**. We see that in Matthew 19:4-6 that it was God himself who said here, “A man must leave all his relatives, to cleave to his wife; and the two shall

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become one flesh. So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, let not man separate.”

There is much Scripture relating to this Institution “the home” I have only listed two.

Ephesians 5:22 - 6:1-4; 1 Corinthians 11:3

Here in these passages we find the **order** that it is to follow. The head of the man is Christ, the head of the woman is man, and the children are to obey their parents. This is the pattern of the authority given to this institution. Everyone in the home must follow this pattern and do this in compliance with God’s authority, who has commanded it.

It must also be noted that this authority given to the husband, is to be carried out in a spirit of love and giving, with the husband laying down his life for his wife and family. The wife is to obey her husband, as to the Lord, and the children are to obey their parents for this is right.

2.) The Church Government

Colossians 1:18; Ephesians 5:23

Christ is the head of the church, not the pastor, not the chairman of the church board, not the largest giver, not the longest attending family but the Lord Jesus Christ. Compare 1 Corinthians 1:10-17; Paul addresses the problem with contentions in the household of Chloe.

1 Timothy 5:17; Hebrews 13: 17; Acts 20:28

Again we see the **order** of authority given to the Local Church, Christ is the head, the elders are the Spiritual leadership under Christ.

1 Timothy 5:17

The work of elders is described as ruling, which means to have spiritual leadership. Those who perform this task in a godly and fruitful manner are to be accorded special honor, especially those that labour in the Word and doctrine. The Pastor would be seen as the leading elder.

Deacons are seen as those who would look after the material aspect of the work compare Acts 6:1-6; (they are commonly known as the church board members.)

The qualifications for elders: Greek { ep-is-kop-ay’} oversight, elder

1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9.

* Overseer-ship, office, charge, the office of an elder

* The overseer or presiding officers of a Christian church

Paul outlines the criteria that qualify people for leadership in the church community. All of the items mentioned have to do with **character**. God seems far

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more concerned with the **personal integrity of leaders** than with their education, eloquence, charisma or abilities.

It was customary to have more than one person in each local church who was responsible for spiritual leadership (Acts 14:23), but with one ruling elder having primary leadership as *the pastor*. Functionally, it is the responsibility of the pastor to shepherd, direct, teach, and protect the flock of God entrusted to him. Both Timothy and Titus were pastors of churches started by Paul, who wrote Pastoral Epistles to them. **Application:** Christians should be supportive of their pastors, as they attempt to fulfill their biblical ministry. 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13

Blameless means irreproachable, that is, impeccable in reputation. **The husband of one wife**, faithful to his wife. **Vigilant** means temperate. This speaks of spiritual soberness: not intoxicated or controlled by fleshly passions and sensual appetites. To be **sober** is to be of sound mind; that is, not of frivolous disposition, but serious and possessing good judgment. **Of good behavior** means orderly in life, habits, and work. One who is **given to hospitality** receives strangers warmly and treats guests generously. To be **apt to teach** is to be skillful in teaching Scripture.

3:3. Not given to wine means not addicted to wine. **No striker** means not physically violent. **Not greedy** means not fond of dishonest gain. **Gentle**, means not quarrelsome, peaceable; that is, does not argue over minor matters or always seek to have his way, but defers to the wishes of others when no cardinal doctrine or policy is sacrificed. **Not covetous**, literally, “not a lover of money”: His main priority is not the acquisition of money. Materialism ill befits one called above all to care for the spiritual welfare of souls.

3:4. Rules well his own house means that he manages his family rightly. **Having his children in subjection** means that he brings about **with all gravity** (in a dignified manner) obedience in his children.

3:5. Paul’s reasoning is from the lesser to the greater: a man poorly managing his own family is incapable of giving proper leadership to the church family.

3:6. Not a novice: He is not a new convert or young Christian. We may render the last part of the verse: “lest, being conceited, he fall into judgment incurred by the Devil.” As Satan fell through pride, similarly a novice could be ruined by pride after being promoted to leadership too swiftly.

3:7. A good report: The overseer must not be the object of justified criticism (cf. Luke 6:26) by non-Christians (**them which are without**). Otherwise, he is likely to become a target for **reproach** [disgrace] **and the snare** sprung by **the devil**.

The qualifications for deacons: Greek { dee-ak'-on-os }

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* One who executes the commands of another, esp. of a master, a servant, attendant,

* A deacon, one who, by virtue of the office assigned to him by the church, cares for the poor and has charge of and distributes the money collected for their use. Acts 6:1-5; 1 Timothy 3:8-13

Deacons are a serving office in the church. In order to free the apostles for the more important duties of prayer and ministry of the Word, seven men were appointed to care for the church. These are generally thought to have been deacons (Acts 6:1–4). While there is no “job description” for a servant, the nature of a deacon’s qualifications gives insight into his duties

Deacons performed routine labors in the church, and were responsible for promoting harmony among various believers within the assembly. Those who serve in the position of deacons, are not to be merely in a practical service, but also having a spiritual conviction.

3:10 They are to be first tested, an examination of the required qualities, only when the required testing has been made and they met the scriptural qualification, then they are eligible to serve as deacons.

3:11 Likewise, their wives are to be **Reverent**, befitting the character of their task. **Not Slanderous**, the warning against malicious talkers. **Temperate**, reasonable, moderate, **Faithful in all things**, reliable, honest and dependable in all matters.

3.) The Government or Civil Governing Authorities

Romans 13: 1-7; Titus 3:1; 1 Peter 2:13-15; 1 Timothy 2:1-4; Ephesians 6:5-8

Government is an agency ordained of God

The purpose of human government is to uphold the good and punish the evil. Right and wrong is determined by the state. The Christian citizen is to fear and obey the government, as long as the government does not demand citizens to violate God’s Word. Governmental officials hold office by virtue of God’s appointment and are primarily the servants of God in their offices. The political leader is to actively uphold the good.

The sword is a symbol representing the authority given to government to protect its citizens by punishing those who do what it has determined is wrong. It is important for Christians to be actively involved in government so that the government’s values are consistent with the Word of God.

Subjection to the government is the obligation of all mankind, not just Christians. It is not optional, but an absolute necessity.

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The higher powers are established by God. This applies to all the different forms of government.

When do I not obey the God given authorities?

Romans 13:1 God is the ultimate authority, but when any one of the three governmental authorities established by God, namely the home, church authority, or civil authority, requires that the Christian should violate God's written Word, then that Christian is no longer obliged to be obedient in that particular issue.

Compare: Daniel Chapters 3 and 6; Acts 4:13-21; 5:17-32

What Media or Agency does God use to Exercise His Authority

1.) The Word of God. This is the ultimate authority on the face of the earth, all other forms of authority are subject to the written Word (the Bible).

2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21; Psalm 119:89

2.) The Home.

Ephesians 5:22 - 6:1-4; 1 Corinthians 11:3

3.) The Church Government.

Colossians 1:18; Ephesians 5:23; 1 Timothy 5:17; Hebrews 13: 17; Acts 20:28

4.) The Government (or Civil Governing Authorities)

Romans 13: 1-7; Titus 3:1; 1 Peter 2:13-15; 1 Timothy 2:1-4; Ephesians 6:5-8

How can a person tell if they are submissive to Authority?

Ask the following questions. Answer yes or no, good or bad:

- * What is my attitude to people in authority?
- * How do I react when someone in authority asks me to do something?
- * How do I react when rebuked by someone in authority?
- * Do I immediately obey someone in authority?
- * Do I respect those in authority?
- * Do I pay my dues to the Government and the Church?
- * What is my attitude to tithing, giving, and taxes?
- * How do I talk about those in authority over me?
- * Am I honest with those in authority over me?
- * Do you say one thing in front of those in authority and another thing behind their back?

Biblical Authority in Leadership

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Much is discussed and debated today regarding the subject of authority. Just what is the authority of the pastor and other leaders of the church? It should be abundantly clear that Jesus Christ is the absolute Head of the Church. (Ephesians 1:22; 4:15) No one has the right to usurp His authority.

It should also be noted that God has called, chosen, and therefore authorized spiritual leaders to administer the church under His divine direction (1 Thessalonians 5:12, 13; Hebrews 13:7,17).

That authority is given by the Word of God and is also limited to the Word of God. The God-given authority of the pastors, elders, and teachers of the church should never exceed the authority of the Scripture, nor should personal opinions be imposed on the people.

Biblical leadership does not demand or dictate, but rather patiently perseveres in the teaching and application of the Word of God. Biblical leadership is best expressed in faithful, loving service to the congregation. It includes accountability to Christ, to the Scripture, to their overseers and to the local congregation.

Personal Integrity

No one can lead God's people effectively without personal integrity. Sincerity, honesty, and credibility must be modeled.

A high and holy standard is required.

1 Timothy 3:1–13 describes that Scriptural standard as it is applied to both pastors (bishops) and deacons. In 1 Timothy 4:12 the Apostle Paul gave a young leader by the name of Timothy the charge to "be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity." In all public and private matters the leaders of the church should exemplify the very best in behavior. With leadership there is great responsibility because leaders will be held in more severe judgment than its followers (James 3:1).

The leader is set apart by standards that require inward and outward character which is Christ like. In particular the leader must exhibit a quality family life with a strong, healthy marriage, if he is married, he must live in a godly way with the children and each member of the family.

Moral Purity

A primary characteristic of the leader's life is purity. The leader must be pure in heart and lead a holy life. In a day in which moral standards are constantly lowered and accommodated to sinful society, Christian leaders are not immune to temptations. However, if one is to lead God's people effectively, he must

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maintain moral purity in the power of God's Spirit, who is holy. Any sinful habit or questionable behavior should be discarded (1 Tim. 6:11). Many people, including children and teenagers, are looking to church leaders for guidance and a godly example and should be able to expect a consistent testimony and blameless life from their leaders.

A virtuous life is the platform upon which all of ministry rests. "Be clean, you who bear the vessels of the LORD" (Isaiah 52:11).

Practical Humility

The Christian leader is a servant: A servant of God and a servant of the people. The Lord Jesus was the greatest leader of all time. He is the Lord of all, yet He humbled Himself and took the attitude of a servant and even died shamefully on a cross in sacrificial love for us (Phil. 2:5–8). He never considered Himself too good to mix with common people, to touch a leper, to wash His disciples' feet. Church leaders should demonstrate that same spirit of Christ today.

A Christ like attitude of gentleness and the disposition of humility should be exercised in practical service which helps to heal the hurts of broken humanity. Christian leaders are not celebrities, but servants. God uses humble servants who are willing to sacrifice self and prideful pursuits for the sake of God's people. God's servants lead with love and by faithful ministry toward those in need.

Responsibility of the Congregation

Church leaders obviously are dependent upon followers who are willing to respond positively to leadership. Since leaders have a great responsibility to lead effectively, members of the church also have a responsibility to those leaders.

1. The first of these responsibilities is to pray for church leaders

(Hebrews 13:17,18) Even the Lord Jesus requested that His disciples "watch and pray" in the garden of Gethsemane as He submitted Himself to the way of the cross. Pastors and church officers are under attack from Satan; the world is becoming increasingly resistant to the message of the Bible, many are discouraged. Pray that God's champions will stay strong in the faith, in love, in purity. Pray that the Gospel will be preached with conviction and boldness. Pray daily for your Pastor and his family and God will bless you for it.

2. Another responsibility is to honour leaders with love and respect.

The Bible says to give honour to whom honour is due (Rom. 13:7). First Timothy 5:17 says, "Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine." Be very, very careful about

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criticizing a spiritual leader. Churches honour themselves and present a positive witness to the community when leadership is treated with respect and admiration. This should include adequate compensation for those ministers who labor full-time for the Lord and the church (1 Tim. 5:18).

3. **A third responsibility is to follow spiritual leaders**

(Hebrews 13:7). Paul admonishes his followers to “imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ” (1 Corinthians 11:1). The sheep should follow a faithful shepherd. In Hebrews 13:17, believers are admonished to obey those who watch over their souls. Assuming the leader is godly and is leading according to the Word of God, the members of the church should lovingly and sincerely seek to follow the pastor and church leadership.

4. **Finally, leaders should be encouraged.**

The best way to encourage your pastor or spiritual mentor is by growing in your own Christian life and becoming an effective witness for Jesus Christ. If you are blessed by the ministry of another person, do not hesitate to express that affirmation personally and spread the word to others of your appreciation. By doing so you will strengthen the reputation of your church and bless the heart of your pastor. The impact of such encouragement is immeasurable!

The church in every generation is dependent upon its leadership and its followers to effectively maintain its mission on earth. In this day of both crisis and opportunity, God is looking for leaders who recognize the authority of Jesus Christ, who will lead with vision and boldness, with courage and conviction, and who will take the message of Jesus to the world. Such leaders make an eternal difference as they faithfully follow the Lord and lovingly guide His church.

It is with deep gratitude that we lovingly and prayerfully support our godly and gifted leaders, knowing the church and the kingdom will prosper with such Christ like and competent direction.