

## CHAPTER ONE

### THE IMPORTANCE OF AUTHORITY

Scripture Reading: Rom. 13:1-7; Heb. 1:3; Isa. 14:12-14; Matt. 6:13; 26:62-64

#### THE THRONE OF GOD ESTABLISHED UPON AUTHORITY

God's works issue from God's throne; God's throne is established upon authority. All things have been created by the authority of God, and all laws on earth are held together through authority. Hence, the Bible says that God upholds all things by the word, which is of His authority (Heb. 1:3b). It does not say that God upholds all things by His power. God's authority represents God Himself; God's power only represents God's works. It is easy to be forgiven of sin against God's power, but it is not that easy to be forgiven of sin against God's authority, because sinning against God's authority is sinning against God Himself. In the whole universe only God is authority. All other authorities are appointed by God. Nothing is greater than authority in the universe; nothing can surpass it. For this reason, if we want to serve God, we must know God's authority.

#### SATAN'S BEGINNING

Satan became Satan because he overstepped God's authority. He wanted to compete with God and to stand in opposition to God. Rebellion is the cause of the fall of Satan.

Both Isaiah 14:12-15 and Ezekiel 28:13-17 speak of the transgression and the fall of Satan. Isaiah 14 tells us that Satan violated God's authority, while Ezekiel 28 tells us that he violated God's holiness. Violating God's authority is a matter of rebellion; it is more serious than violating God's holiness. Sin is a matter of conduct; it is easy to be forgiven of sin. But rebellion is a matter of principle; it is not easy to be forgiven of rebellion. Satan, in trying to set up his throne above that of God's, violated God's authority. The principle of Satan is the principle of self-exaltation. Sin's coming into being was not the cause of Satan's fall. Rather, Satan's rebellion against God's authority, for which he was condemned by God, subsequently gave rise to sin.

Hence, if we want to serve God, we can never violate the matter of authority. To do so is to follow the principle of Satan. We can never preach the word of Christ under the principle of Satan. There is a possibility in God's work that we can stand in principle on Satan's side, while we stand in doctrine on Christ's side. All the while, we may think that we are still doing the Lord's work. This is a very evil thing. Satan is not afraid of us preaching the words of Christ. He is only afraid of us submitting to the authority of Christ. Our service to God can never be according to the principle of Satan. Once the principle of Christ comes, the principle

of Satan has to go. Even now Satan is still a usurper in the air; he will not be cast out until the end of Revelation. Only when we wash ourselves spotlessly clean from the principle of Satan can we hope to serve God. In the Lord's prayer in Matthew 6:9-13 there is the phrase, "And do not bring us into temptation." Temptation speaks of Satan's work. There is also the phrase, "But deliver us from the evil one." This refers to Satan himself. Following this, the Lord said, "For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen." This is the most important declaration. The kingdom is God's and so is the authority and the glory. Everything is God's. What sets us completely free from Satan is seeing this most precious thing—the kingdom is God's. The administration of the whole universe is under God. For this reason we have to learn to submit to God's authority. No one can steal God's glory.

Satan showed the Lord all the kingdoms of the earth, but the Lord said that all the kingdom of the heavens is God's. We need to see to whom authority ultimately belongs. When we preach the gospel we are bringing people under the authority of God. If we are to establish God's authority on earth, is it then possible for us not to meet authority ourselves? If we do not, how can we deal with Satan?

### **ALL DISPUTES IN THE UNIVERSE BEING A MATTER OF AUTHORITY**

The center of dispute in the whole universe relates to who has the authority. We have to contend with Satan by asserting that authority is with God. We have to set ourselves to submit to God's authority and to uphold God's authority. We must meet God's authority face-to-face and have a basic realization of it.

Before Paul realized authority, he wanted to eradicate the church from the earth. But after he met the Lord on the way to Damascus, he realized that it was difficult to kick against the goads (God's authority) with his feet (man's energy). He immediately fell down, acknowledged Jesus as Lord, and submitted to the instruction of Ananias in Damascus. Paul met God's authority. At his conversion, Paul was brought not only into a realization of God's salvation, but also into a realization of God's authority. Paul was an intelligent and capable man, while Ananias was a very insignificant, small brother. The Bible refers to him only once. If Paul had not met God's authority, how could he possibly have listened to the words of Ananias? Unless a man meets authority on the way to "Damascus," he cannot submit to an insignificant, small brother in "Damascus." This shows us that anyone who has met authority will deal with the authority alone; he will not deal with the person involved. We should only think of the authority, not of the person, because our submission is not to a person but to God's authority in that person. If this is not our attitude, we do not know what authority is. If we deal with the person before submitting to authority, we are completely wrong. If we touch the matter of authority first and then submit to the person, irrespective of who he is, we are on the right path.

God has only one goal in the church, which is to manifest His authority in the universe. We can see God's authority from the coordination in the church. God exercises the utmost of His strength to uphold His authority. His authority is stronger than anything else. We who are so self-confident, but who are in reality so blind, have to come face-to-face at least once with

God's authority. Only when we are broken can we come into submission. Then we will begin to learn what God's authority is. Only when a man meets God's authority will he submit to the deputy authority whom God appoints.

## **THE GREATEST DEMAND IN THE BIBLE BEING SUBMISSION TO GOD'S WILL**

The greatest demand God has on man is not bearing the cross, offerings, consecration, or self-sacrifice. God's greatest demand on man is submission. God commanded Saul to smite the Amalekites and utterly destroy all that they had (1 Sam. 15:1-3). But after Saul overcame the Amalekites, he spared Agag the king of Amalek. He also appreciated the best sheep, the best oxen, and all that was good and refused to destroy them, hoping instead to offer them as sacrifices to God (vv. 7-9, 14-15). But Samuel said to him, "To obey is better than sacrifice, / And to heed, than the fat of rams" (v. 22). The sacrifice spoken of here is the burnt offering; it has nothing to do with sin. It is for God's acceptance and satisfaction. However, Samuel said that to heed and to obey are better than sacrifice. This is because even in this kind of sacrifice there was the possibility of a mixture with the self-will. Only in heeding and obeying is there an absolute honoring of God and an exaltation of His will.

Obedience is the other end of authority. In order to have obedience, one must first keep the self out of the picture. One must not try to obey with the self. There the possibility of obedience only by living in the spirit. Obedience is the highest expression of response to God's will.

## **THE LORD'S PRAYER IN THE GARDEN OF GETHSEMANE**

Some have considered the Lord's prayer in the garden of Gethsemane, where His sweat fell as blood, as a sign of His weakness in the flesh and His fear of the cup (Luke 22:44). But this is not true. The prayer in Gethsemane is the same in principle as what is recorded in 1 Samuel 15:22. The Lord's prayer in Gethsemane is the highest expression of submission to God's authority. Our Lord's submission to God's authority far exceeds His sacrifice on the cross. He earnestly sought to know God's will. He did not say, "I will take the cross" or "I must drink the cup." He only heeded and obeyed. He said, "If it is possible, let this cup pass from Me" (Matt. 26:39b). Here His own preference is not seen, because following this, He said, "Yet not as I will, but as You will" (v. 39c). God's will is absolute, but the cup (i.e., the cross) is not. If it had not been God's will for Him to be crucified, the Lord Jesus very well could have disregarded the cross. Before the Lord was clear concerning God's will, the "cup" and "God's will" were two different things. But after He was clear, the "cup" became the "cup" that the Father had given to Him, and it and God's will became one thing. A will is the representative of an authority. Hence, when submission comes from knowing God's will, that submission is a submission to authority. If there is no prayer and no willingness to know God's will, how can there be submission to authority?

Again the Lord said, "The cup which the Father has given Me, shall I not drink it?" (John 18:11). Here the Lord was upholding the authority of God. The Lord was not upholding His

own cross. At the same time, when He understood that drinking the cup (i.e., being crucified for our redemption) was the will of God, He immediately said, "Arise, let us be going" (Matt. 26:46). He promptly obeyed. Since the cross means the accomplishment of God's will, the Lord's death is the highest expression of submission to authority. Although the cross is the center of the whole universe, it is not higher than the will of God. The Lord upholds the authority of God (the will) more than He upholds His own cross (the sacrifice).

Our service to God is not a matter of voluntary sacrifice or of denial of our self. It is a matter of accomplishing God's will. It is not a matter of picking up the cross. Rather, it is the submission to God's will. This is the basic principle. If the principle of rebellion is present, even a sacrifice is an enjoyment and a glory to Satan. Saul could offer up sheep and oxen, but God would not recognize that as a sacrifice because the principle of Satan was present. To overturn God's authority is to overturn God. Hence, the Bible says that rebellion is like the sin of divination, and insubordination is like idolatry and teraphim (1 Sam. 15:23).

We who are involved in the Lord's work are the servants of God. As such, the first thing we touch is the matter of authority. Touching authority is as real as the matter of touching salvation. For us this is a deeper lesson. We must be touched and smitten at least once by authority. Only then can we work the work of God. In our relationship with God, nothing is more important than touching authority. Once we touch it, we will see it wherever we turn. Only then can we be restricted by God, and only then can we begin to be used by God.

## **THE JUDGMENT OF THE LORD AND OF PAUL**

In Matthew 26 and 27 the Lord was summoned for two kinds of judgment: from religion before the high priest (26:57-66) and from the civil government before Pilate (27:11-14). When interrogated by Pilate, the Lord could choose not to answer, because He was not bound by earthly rule. But when the high priest adjured Him by the name of the living God, the Lord had to answer. This is a question of submission to authority. Again in Acts 23 when Paul was judged, after he realized that Ananias was the high priest of God, he readily submitted. We who are workers of the Lord must come face-to-face with this matter of authority. Otherwise, our work will not be in the principle of God's will, which is the principle of submission to authority. Instead, we will be in the principle of Satan's rebellion, which is the principle of working without God's will. This matter indeed requires a great revelation.

In Matthew 7:21-23 the Lord rebuked those who prophesied, cast out demons, and performed many wonderful works in His name. What was wrong with this work in the Lord's name? It was wrong because man was the source in all these works. Out of themselves men were working in the name of the Lord. This was the activity of the flesh. For this reason the Lord considered it to be lawlessness. Their work could not be considered as work. Following this word, the Lord said that only those who do the Father's will can enter the kingdom of the heavens. This shows that all works should originate from submission to God's will. God has to be the source. All works are assigned by God. No work should be sought out by man. Only when a man understands God's will in His assignment can there be the experience of the reality of the authority of the kingdom of the heavens.

## **THE REALIZATION OF AUTHORITY BEING A GREAT REVELATION**

In the universe there are two great things: believing unto salvation and submitting to authority. In other words, to trust and obey. The Bible shows us that the definition of sin is lawlessness (1 John 3:4). In Romans 2:12 the phrase “without the law” is the same as “lawless.” To be lawless is to disregard the authority of God, and to disregard the authority of God is sin. To transgress is a matter of conduct, but to be lawless is a matter of attitude and heart. The present age is one of lawlessness; the world is full of sins of lawlessness. Even the lawless one is about to be manifested. At the same time, authority will have less and less place in the world. In the end all authority will be overthrown. What remains will be a reign of lawlessness.

Hence, there are two principles in the universe—God's authority and Satan's rebellion. We cannot serve God on the one hand, while taking the way of rebellion with a spirit of rebellion on the other hand. Although a rebellious person can preach, Satan will laugh, because the principle of Satan is there in the preaching. Service is ever attendant to authority. Do we want to submit to God's authority or not? We who serve God must gain this basic understanding at some time. It is like touching electricity. Once one touches it, he will never be careless with it. In the same way, once a man meets God's authority and is smitten by it, his eyes will be enlightened. He will be able to discern not only himself, but others as well. He will know who is and who is not lawless.

May God be merciful to us that we would be delivered from the way of rebellion. We can lead God's children in the proper path only when we know God's authority and have learned the lesson of submission.