

Foundations Course - Supplement

THE PRINCIPLE OF SUBMISSION AND AUTHORITY

Key Scriptures: *Ephesians 5:21; James 4:7*

Introduction

In *Matthew 8:5-13* and *Luke 7:1-10* we have the story of a Roman centurion who recognised true spiritual authority in Jesus. Jesus had it because he was under authority, i.e. he was submitted to the authority of the Father. *John 8:28b, 5:19, 30*

The centurion didn't have spiritual authority himself or else he could have handled the matter of the sick servant. However, because of his experience of limited authority he understood how spiritual authority functioned.

The centurion wasn't perfect. He didn't always make right decisions. He was subject to the weaknesses of human nature, but he recognised and functioned in his sphere of authority, as did those for whom he was responsible. In turn he related to authority.

Jesus recognised the centurion's response and saw his understanding. He said, *"I tell you the truth, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith"*. Thus we can see that a right heart attitude and response to spiritual authority is allied to faith and releases the power of God to work for the benefit of the individual. Right relationship to spiritual authority releases God's power and provides protection, blessing, etc.

The need for authority

If God's people are to function effectively as a corporate force in the world, there needs to be structure in the Body of Christ for proper co-ordination. Among various metaphors in the Scriptures relating to God's people (the church) is that of an army. An army has structure, discipline, fights wars, marches together (i.e. in unity), strives for victory, has ranks and is under leadership and authority. The centurion would have been extremely familiar with these elements.

The scope of authority

There are various areas of authority with which we come into contact:

- spiritual authority
- matrimonial authority
- parental authority
- secular authority (work, school, police, local government, state and federal government)

The highest area of authority is spiritual authority. This is God-given and rests upon God's appointed and anointed leaders, unlike ecclesiastical authority which is vested in the position or office held. (Some hold both ecclesiastical and spiritual authority.)

If we are to fully develop in God we must be willing to submit to others more mature in the Lord to train us. We are to combat the spirit of independence by being inter-dependent.

Kingdom perspective

There are two kingdoms in conflict and the principles of each are opposed to one another. In various areas these are: (Fill in the blanks. The first letter of each word is given to help you)

God's perspective		The world's perspective
Light	Kingdom	D
J	King	S
S	Attitude	R
O	Actions	D
E	Rulership	D
F	Response	F
H	Characteristic	P
T	Spirit	E
F	Atmosphere	U
L	Motivation	L
O	Result	C

We can manifest our response to the Lordship of Jesus and his kingdom in three areas:

- our worship of God
- training in discipleship
- recognition of authority

God's authority structure

1. Highest (ultimate) authority
James 4:7 exhorts us to submit to God (Father, Son, Holy Spirit). Submission here acknowledges the highest or ultimate authority of God himself. This authority is through the Bible, to our spirits (our conscience) for conviction, guidance, teaching, adjustment.
2. Delegated authority
Man is called to be in submission to Christ (*1 Corinthians 11:3*) and in practical terms this is lived out in relation to delegated authorities.

Situation	Authority	Reference
Man	Christ	<i>1 Corinthians 11:3</i>
Church	Shepherds	<i>Hebrews 13:17, 7</i>
Marriage	Husbands	<i>Ephesians. 5:22,23;</i> <i>1 Peter 3:1; Colossians 3:18</i>
Home	Parents	<i>Ephesians 6:1-3; 1 Timothy 3:4</i>
Work (School)	Employers (Teachers)	<i>Colossians 3:18-23</i>
Society	Governments	<i>Romans 13:1-4; 2 Peter 2:13-14</i>

In addition we are required to submit to one another (*Ephesians 5:21*) and we demonstrate this by our willingness to serve one another.

An attitude of submission towards delegated authority flows from an attitude of submission to God. It is this prevailing attitude that strikes a death blow to any rebellion that would spring up in our hearts.

Submission and obedience in balance

1. To highest authority - both submission and obedience at all times
2. To delegated authority - submission at all times (i.e. a matter of heart attitude)\
- obedience is relative

Submission relates to the heart, invisible to man. Obedience relates to conduct and may be seen by man. When a man obeys God he gives the only possible evidence that in his heart he believes in God. There is no faith without obedience. *Romans 1:5; 15:18; 16:26*

A believer should disobey only when there is conflict with direction from highest authority, but even then he/she should talk it over with the delegated authority where possible before taking action. A continuing conflict requires obedience to the highest authority and a willingness to submit to the consequences imposed by the delegated authority (e.g. a government imposing laws contrary to the word of God).

Comments

1. Realise that it is God who gives spiritual authority. There is an anointing that goes with it only when the person with spiritual authority shows submission.
2. Realise that submission to authority is a God-given blessing for our protection and development.
3. No delegated authority can demand obedience which conflicts with total obedience to highest authority, i.e. with God and his word.
4. No delegated authority can demand obedience which infringes the conscience of the individual for to do so would drive him/her into sin. *Romans 14:23*
5. We are protected by the authority to whom we submit. Rightly responded to it provides a covering. When we are unsubmitted we are unprotected.

Facts concerning spiritual authority

1. Spiritual authority does not restrict, it brings liberty.
2. Spiritual authority does not oppress, it brings creativity.
3. Spiritual authority does not bring servility, but it does engender the serving spirit of Christ.
4. Spiritual authority does not destroy a person's decision-making process, but it does mean that he/she will never have to make a weighty decision alone.
5. Spiritual authority is not of law, but is of grace.

PAGE TWO FILL-INS: Answers

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JESUS	King	SATAN
SUBMISSION	Attitude	REBELLION
OBEDIENCE	Actions	DISOBEDIENCE
EXAMPLE	Rulership	DOMINATION
FREEWILL	Response	FORCE
HUILITY	Characteristic	PRIDE
TRUTH (HOPE)	Spirit	ERROR (DESPAIR)
FAITH	Atmosphere	UNBELIEF
LOVE	Motivation	LUST
OVERCOMERS (ORDER)	Result	CONQUERED (CHAOS)

