

Geistliche Autorität – Teil 1

Was versteht man unter geistlicher Autorität?

Es herrscht eine große Verwirrung, was die „Geistliche Autorität“ anbelangt, weil die Menschen dazu neigen, „natürliche Autorität“ mit „geistlicher Autorität“ zu verwechseln. Diese Verwirrung ist überall in den Lehren von anerkannten christlichen Lehrern, wie Bill Gothard und Watchman Nee gegenwärtig.

„Natürliche Autorität“ ist die Macht (oder die Autorität), die Menschen über andere haben. Die Menschen tendieren dazu, die Bereiche ihres Lebens auszunutzen, die dazu beitragen, ihren Sinn für Macht zu befriedigen. Zum Beispiel ist es nicht ungewöhnlich für einflussreiche Männer, dass sie 1 000 Dollar für einen Markenanzug ausgeben, 150 Dollar für eine Seidenkrawatte, 200 Dollar für Lederschuhe, Tausende Dollar für eine Rolex-Uhr und Zig-Tausend Dollar für einen Luxusschlitten. Alles Andere gibt ihnen kein Machtgefühl.

Die Männer sind in ihren Machtstrebungen aber nicht allein. Die Frauen betrachten sich in „Männer-Welt“ lebend. Um sich wichtig zu fühlen, meinen die Frauen deshalb, dass sie eine gewisse Macht über die Männer haben müssten. Aber da sie körperlich weniger einschüchternd sind als die meisten Männer, mussten sich Frauen andere Methoden aneignen, um Macht und Kontrolle zu erlangen. Ein besonders effektives Mittel, das sie dazu einsetzen, ist ihr Sex-Appeal. Der üblichste Weg ist, dass sie ihre körperlich-sinnlichen Merkmale hervorheben. Sie neigen dazu:

- Kleider zu tragen, die ihre Figur betonen

- Schuhe zu tragen, die ihre Beine lang und schlank aussehen lassen
- Makeup und Frisuren zu tragen, die ihr Gesicht betonen
- Schmuck und Nagellack, um ihre Hände zu betonen

usw.

Frauen haben verstanden, dass der Sexualtrieb des Mannes seine Schwäche ist; und wenn sie diese Schwäche erfolgreich ausnutzen, gewinnen sie Macht über ihn. Andere Frauen gehen in das andere Extrem über und versuchen, sich so zu kleiden und so zu handeln, wie es Männer tun, um sich ihnen anzupassen. Nichts von alledem hat etwas mit „geistlicher Autorität“ zu tun. Der „natürliche“ Mensch benutzt seine „Autorität“, um Macht und Kontrolle ausüben zu können.

„Natürliche Autorität“ hat etwas mit Einschüchterung zu tun, die dann in Macht und Kontrolle über andere umgesetzt wird. Man findet diese Tatsache überall in der Natur. Tierrudel haben ihre dominanten Führer. Das sind in der Regel diejenigen, die andere am meisten einschüchtern können. Phrasen wie „Hackordnung“ und „der König des Dschungels“ kommen von der Vorstellung über die „natürliche Autorität“. In ähnlicher Weise spiegeln Männer von stattlicher Statur, mit einer tiefen Stimme und einer starken Persönlichkeit den Machtsinn wider. Leute, die große, teure Häuser und Autos haben, Spielzeuge wie Yachten und Flugzeuge, schüchtern natürlich all jene ein, die diese Dinge nicht besitzen. Leute, die Posten in der Politik, im höheren Management, im Finanzsektor, bei der Polizei und im pastoralen Dienst bekleiden, sind Ehrfurcht gebietend. Bei der „natürlichen Autorität“ geht es vor allem um Ausübung von Macht und Kontrolle über andere.

Viele der christlichen Lehren zum Thema „geistliche Autorität“ versuchen, die

„natürliche Autorität“ mit dem geistlichen Bereich in Einklang zu bringen. Aber das funktioniert einfach nicht, sondern trägt eher dazu bei, einen Totalitarismus zu schaffen. Er ist verantwortlich für die traditionelle Denkweise, dass „geistliche Autorität“ eine **Position** sei, in der man andere beherrscht und kontrolliert und die sich durch **Quantität** auszeichnen würde, wobei es um die Zahl der Leute geht, über die man Macht ausübt, um die Größe der Gemeinde, die man organisiert, um das Einkommensniveau usw. Aber das ist nichts Anderes als „natürliche Autorität“, der man einen neuen Namen gegeben hat. Dabei handelt es sich nicht um wahre „geistliche Autorität“.

Die Vermischung von „natürlicher Autorität“ mit „geistlicher Autorität“ hat das wahre Wesen der „geistlichen Autorität“ unübersichtlich gemacht. Es veranlasst Männer dazu, Pastor einer Kirche zu werden, damit sie sich „wichtig“ fühlen, weil eine Kirche zu haben, ihrem Bedürfnis nach Autorität entspricht. Die Folge davon ist, dass immer mehr kleine Kirchen entstehen, weil Männer damit zu kämpfen haben, ihre verdrehte Ansicht über „geistliche Autorität“ zu realisieren. Und da Quantität der Maßstab für solch eine Autorität ist, besteht wenig Hoffnung auf Einheit, weil die Pastoren miteinander im Konkurrenzkampf im Hinblick auf ihre Kirchenmitglieder stehen, weil sie die Größe ihrer eigenen Kirche erhöhen möchten, was wiederum ihre eigene Autorität steigert. Bei der „natürlichen Autorität“ ist derjenige der Gewinner, der das größte Stück vom Kuchen abbekommt.

Ist dies wirklich das, was Gott mit „geistlicher Autorität“ beabsichtigt hat? Natürlich nicht. Das ist in Wahrheit nur das Ergebnis von dem Mangel an Erkenntnis über die wahre „geistliche Autorität“. Bei der „geistlichen Autorität“ geht es NICHT um Macht oder Gesetz, sondern ums Dienen. Sie wird nicht an der Quantität gemessen, die sie kontrolliert, sondern an dem Ausmaß des

persönlichen Opfers. „Geistliche Autorität“ ist genau das Gegenteil von „natürlicher Autorität“ und zwar in fast jeder Hinsicht.

„Geistliche Autorität“ in der Bibel

Im gesamten Alten Testament hat Gott nicht direkt zu Seinem Volk gesprochen, sondern nur durch das Gesetz und die Propheten. Männer wurden zu Priestern eingesetzt, um die Bedürfnisse von Gottes Volk zu repräsentieren. Darüber hinaus wirkte Gott auch nicht direkt auf das Leben Seines Volkes ein, so dass es unfähig war, sich zu wandeln. Die Israeliten würden niemals etwas anderes sein, als das, was sie von Geburt an waren. Im Alten Testament kam die „geistliche Autorität“ durch Männer zustande, die für Gott sprachen, also durch die Propheten oder diejenigen, die, als Priester, das Volk vor Gott repräsentierten. Es gab da eine Autoritätspyramide mit Gott an der Spitze, gefolgt von Seinen Herrschern und religiösen Führern. Das Volk Gottes nahm bei dieser Pyramide den Platz ganz unten ein.

Im Neuen Testament braucht das Volk keine Männer mehr, um direkten Zugang zu Gott zu haben.

Matthäus Kapitel 27, Vers 51

Da zerriss der Vorhang im Tempel von oben bis unten in zwei Stücke, die Erde erbebte und die Felsen zersprangen.

Im Neuen Testament spricht Gott DIREKT mit Seinem Volk. Unter diesem Testament braucht Gottes Volk keine Männer mehr, die ihre Bedürfnisse vor Gott repräsentieren. Sie können mit ihren Belangen jetzt selbst zu Gott kommen.

Hebräer Kapitel 4, Vers 16

So wollen wir denn mit freudiger Zuversicht zum Thron der Gnade hinzutreten, um Barmherzigkeit zu empfangen und Gnade zu finden zu rechtzeitiger Hilfe (d.h. so dass wir Hilfe zu rechter Zeit finden).

Die Position, welche die Männer einst einnahmen und die „geistliche Autorität“, die sie ausübten, gehört jetzt wieder Gott, der in den Herzen von jedem Gläubigen wirkt.

Gottes Grund, weshalb er die Männer von der „geistlichen Autorität“ über Sein Volk entbunden hat, geht weit darüber hinaus, dass es nun direkten Zugang zu Ihm hat. ER will auch direkten Zugang zu Seinen Kindern haben. Aber dies könnte kaum erreicht werden, wenn Sein Volk noch in demselben Zustand der Sünde und der Rebellion (und somit der Verdammnis) bliebe, in welchem es hineingeboren wurde. Im gesamten Neuen Testament kann Gott etwas tun, was niemals geschehen konnte, solange Männer „geistliche Autorität“ ausübten, nämlich die Herzen von Menschen verändern.

2.Korinther Kapitel 3, Verse 17-18

17 Der HERR aber ist der Geist; wo aber der Geist des HERRN ist, da ist Freiheit.

18 Wir alle aber, die wir mit unverhülltem Angesicht die Herrlichkeit des HERRN widerspiegeln (oder: sich in uns spiegeln lassen), werden dadurch in das gleiche Bild (oder: in Sein Ebenbild) umgestaltet von Herrlichkeit zu Herrlichkeit (= von einer Herrlichkeit zur anderen), wie das (oder: da es ja) vom HERRN des Geistes (dem Heiligen Geist) geschieht.

Nur wenn wir unser Leben der „geistlichen Autorität“ des Heiligen Geistes übergeben, können wir die Transformation realisieren, die Gott sich für uns

wünscht. Paulus beschreibt den Unterschied zwischen den beiden Testamenten, indem er sagt:

Römer Kapitel 8, Verse 2-4

2 Denn das Gesetz des Lebensgeistes in Christus Jesus hat uns von dem Gesetz der Sünde und des Todes freigemacht. 3 Denn was dem (Mosaischen) Gesetz unmöglich war, das, worin es wegen (des Widerstandes) des Fleisches ohnmächtig war – Gott hat (es vollbracht), (nämlich) die Sünde im Fleische verurteilt, indem Er Seinen Sohn in der Gleichgestalt des Sündenfleisches und um der Sünde willen sandte, 4 damit die Rechtsforderung des Gesetzes ihre Erfüllung fände in uns (oder: an uns), die wir nicht nach dem Fleische wandeln, sondern nach dem Geiste.

Viele Christen wollen zu der „geistlichen Autorität“ des Alten Testaments zurückkehren. Es gefällt ihnen, Männer zu haben, die sie Gott als ihre Priester vorstellen können. Aber Menschen können keine Herzen verändern. Das ist die Arbeit des Heiligen Geistes. Wenn Männer zwischen uns und Gott stehen, dann geht die Transformationskraft des Heiligen Geistes entweder verloren oder sie wird eingeschränkt. Dieses Modell hatte sich im Alten Testament als Fehler erwiesen, und es ist heute ebenfalls ein Fehler. Schauen wir uns dazu doch nur den Mangel an geistlicher Reife im zeitgenössischen Christentum an! Was ist in den beinahe 2 000 Jahren dabei herausgekommen, dass Männer „geistliche Autorität“ ausgeübt haben? Gott will nicht, dass Sein Volk sich der „geistlichen Autorität“ von irgendjemandem oder irgendetwas unterwirft, sondern nur Ihm. Menschen können Dich nicht verändern, aber Gott kann es.

Jeder Christ, der eine Transformation erfahren hat, weiß, dass dies ein souveräner Akt Gottes war. Sie erlebte etwas, das unbeschreiblich ist und

ohne Frage vom Geist Gottes stammt. Wenn man das weiß, weshalb lässt man dann zu, dass Männer den Gläubigen sagen, dass diese Macht von Gott durch sie kommen muss?

Jesus Christus hatte Seinen Jüngern gesagt:

Lukas Kapitel 24, Vers 49

„Und wisset wohl: ICH sende das Verheißungsgut Meines Vaters auf euch herab; ihr aber bleibt hier in der Stadt, bis ihr mit Kraft aus der Höhe ausgerüstet worden seid!“

Diese „Kraft aus der Höhe“ war das souveräne Werk Gottes. Als sie kam, wurde sie nicht durch einen Propheten oder eine Predigt eingeführt. Die umwandelnde Kraft war die „spirituelle Autorität“, die ihnen von Gott direkt gegeben wurde und nicht durch Priester oder Propheten, und sie hat die Welt verändert. Wenn die Welt sich wieder verändern soll, müssen wir uns erneut dem Geist Gottes allein, als unsere „spirituelle Autorität“ unterwerfen.

Geistliche Autorität oder Souveränität

Geistliche Autorität ist die Autorität des Heiligen Geistes, die Er in unser Leben bringt.

Johannes Kapitel 18, Vers 36

Jesus antwortete: »Mein Reich (= Mein Königtum) ist nicht von dieser Welt. Wäre Mein Reich von dieser Welt, so würden Meine Diener (für Mich) kämpfen, damit ICH den Juden nicht überliefert würde; nun aber ist Mein Reich nicht von hier (oder: derart).«

Jesus Christus erklärt hier, dass Sein Reich, über das Er regiert, nicht ein Teil der Reiche dieser Welt ist. ER sagte weiter zu Seinen Jüngern:

Lukas Kapitel 17, Vers 21

„Man wird auch nicht sagen können: ›Siehe, hier ist es!‹ oder ›dort ist es!‹
Denn wisset wohl: Das Reich Gottes ist (bereits) mitten unter euch.“

Das Reich von Jesus Christus, in das Er Seine Autorität einbringt, befindet sich in unseren Herzen. Wir Christen haben die einzigartige Macht,

- unser Leben darniederzulegen
- die Versuchung zu überwinden
- uns im Hinblick auf die Sünde selbst zu verleugnen
- einander zu lieben, wie Er uns liebt

Das ist die größte Macht, die jemand besitzen kann. Es ist NICHT die Macht, über andere zu herrschen (als ob Sein „Reich von dieser Welt“ wäre), sondern über sich selbst zu herrschen. Wahre geistliche Autorität ist die Autorität über sich selbst. Die beste Beschreibung für geistliche Autorität gibt uns Jesus Christus, indem Er sagt:

Matthäus Kapitel 5, Verse 38-45

38 „Ihr habt gehört, dass (den Alten) geboten worden ist (2.Mose 21,24; 3.Mose 24,19-20): ›Auge um (= gegen) Auge und Zahn um (= gegen) Zahn!‹
39 ICH dagegen sage euch: Ihr sollt dem Bösen (= der Bosheit) keinen Widerstand leisten; sondern wer dich auf die rechte Wange schlägt, dem halte auch die andere hin, 40 und wer mit dir einen Rechtsstreit anfangen und dir den Rock nehmen (= pfänden) will, dem überlass auch noch den Mantel, 41 und wer dich zu einer Meile Weges nötigt (= presst), mit dem gehe

zwei. 42 Wer dich (um etwas) bittet, dem gib, und wer (Geld) von dir borgen will, den weise nicht ab! 43 Ihr habt gehört, dass (den Alten) geboten worden ist (3.Mose 19,18); ›Du sollst deinen Nächsten lieben, und deinen Feind hassen!‹ 44 ICH dagegen sage euch: Liebet eure Feinde und betet für eure Verfolger, 45 damit ihr euch als Söhne (bzw. Kinder) eures himmlischen Vaters erweist. Denn Er lässt Seine Sonne über Böse und Gute aufgehen und lässt regnen auf Gerechte und Ungerechte.“

Das ist die größte Macht! Kein Eroberer, der jemals gelebt hat, kein Krieger, der jemals gekämpft hat und kein König, der jemals regiert hat, besaß die Macht, das Herz zu beherrschen. Natürliche Autorität mag die Macht haben, andere zu kontrollieren; aber nur die geistliche Autorität des Geistes Gottes kann unsere Herzen kontrollieren. Geistliche Autorität nimmt zu, nicht indem man eine Kirche hat, sondern indem Du Dein Leben für andere aufopferst. In diesem Zusammenhang hat eine ältere Witwe, die danach trachtet, anderen zu dienen, mehr geistliche Autorität als jede andere Person in ihrer Kirche.

Echte geistliche Autorität ist grundlegend. Schauen wir uns dazu folgende Bibelstellen an:

1.Korinther Kapitel 3, Vers 10

Nach der mir von Gott verliehenen Gnade habe ich als ein kundiger Baumeister den Grund (bei euch) gelegt; ein anderer baut darauf weiter; jeder aber möge zusehen, wie er darauf weiterbaut!

Epheser Kapitel 2, Verse 19-22

19 Demnach seid ihr jetzt nicht mehr Fremdlinge und Beisassen (d.h. geduldete Ausländer, oder: zugelassene Fremdlinge), sondern seid Vollbürger mit den Heiligen und Gottes Hausgenossen (d.h. Glieder der Gottesfamilie), 20 aufgebaut auf dem Grund (= der Grundmauer) der Apostel

und Propheten, (ein Bau) bei welchem Christus Jesus selber der Eckstein ist:
21 In Ihm wächst jeder Bau, fest zusammengefügt, zu einem heiligen Tempel
im HERRN empor, 22 und in diesem werdet auch ihr (Heiden) mitaufgebaut
zu einer Wohnstätte Gottes im Geist.

Offenbarung Kapitel 21, Vers 14

Die Mauer der Stadt hatte zwölf Grundsteine (oder: Steinlagen im Grundbau;
vgl. V.19), und auf ihnen standen die zwölf Namen der zwölf Apostel des
Lammes geschrieben.

Hier sehen wir, dass der Dienst als Unterstützung oder Fundament für die
Gläubigen gedacht ist. Die meisten Pastoren verwechseln geistliche Autorität
mit natürlicher Autorität und betrachten ihren Dienst als die Spitze ihrer
Kirchen. Wenn dies der Fall ist, dann wird er unübertrefflich. Aber der wahre
Dienst ist grundlegend und soll nicht souverän sein.

Die meisten Kirchenführer beschreiben die Kirchenleitung als umgekehrtes
Dreieck, wobei die Gläubigen an der Spitze stehen und die Führer ganz
unten. Es ist bemerkenswert, wie sie das Richtige sagen können, aber es
dann nicht praktizieren. Sie sind genauso wenig ganz unten wie der Präsident
von Amerika ganz unten in seiner Regierung steht.

Um den Sumpf zu verstehen, der aus der gegenwärtigen Verdrehung der
geistlichen Autorität, wobei Menschen in ihren Kirchen über andere
herrschen, resultiert, braucht man nur auf Tragödien zu blicken, wie sie sich
bei [Jim Jones](#) und [David Koresh](#) zugetragen haben. Das mögen jetzt extreme
Beispiele für geistlichen Missbrauch sein; aber sich selbst überlassen wird
sich jede Gruppe, die einer Person (Mann oder Frau) erlaubt, geistliche
Autorität auszuüben, möglicherweise der Versuchung aussetzen, ein Kult zu

werden. Die Menschen verstehen nicht, dass die meisten Kulte als legitime Kirchen ihren Anfang genommen haben. David Koresh und die Branch Davidians waren einst Siebenten Tags-Adventisten. Jim Jones war ein Pastor der Heiligkeitsbewegung; David/Moses Berg war ein Mitglied der Missionary Alliance Church, und Jim Bakker hatte das Central Bible College in Minnesota besucht und begann seine Karriere als Wanderprediger. Jeder dieser Männer ließ es zu, dass die populäre Ideologie der geistlichen Autorität außer Kontrolle geriet.

Die meisten von uns kennen Kirchen, die sich als Kulte betrachten oder zumindest „kultisch“ handeln. In jedem dieser Fälle üben geistliche Führer mit unterschiedlichen Graden der Macht Kontrolle über diese Gruppen aus. Jeder, der die Macht der Führer in Frage stellt, wird als geistlich unterentwickelt (unreif) und rebellisch betrachtet. Sehr oft wird so ein Kritiker als Judas bezeichnet. Wir alle wissen, dass diese Form von Macht falsch ist. Wir wissen instinktiv, dass es sich hierbei nicht um wahre geistliche Autorität handelt, sondern um natürliche Autorität, der sich irgeleitete Menschen unterwerfen.

Es gibt keinen Unterschied zwischen diesen extremen Beispielen von Kultkontrolle und der Macht, wie sie der geistlichen Autorität zugeschrieben wird. Wirklich keinen! Keiner, der in einen Kult involviert ist, glaubt, dass seine Gruppe ein Kult ist. Keiner, der sich dem unterordnet, was er als geistliche Autorität betrachtet, glaubt, dass es dabei um etwas Anderes gehen könnte als um Geistliches. Diese Menschen ordnen sich etwas unter, von dem sie glauben, dass es ihre geistliche Autorität sei, weil sie sich einreden, dadurch Gott zu gefallen. Aber nichts könnte weiter von der Wahrheit entfernt sein. Es gefällt Gott nicht, dass man sich Menschen unterwirft, denn es ist Gott allein, dem man sich hingeben sollte.

Das ist auch der Grund, weshalb Gott keine geistliche Hierarchie unter Seinem Volk aufrecht erhält. Wahre geistliche Autorität ist die Macht, allen zu dienen. Und dieses Dienen soll geschehen, ohne dass man biblische Grundsätze in Frage stellt. Nur Menschen, die sich aufopfern und die aktive Kraft des Heiligen Geistes in ihrem Leben haben, können wahre Gottesdiener sein. Echte geistliche Autorität ist eines der schwierigsten Dinge, die es zu meistern gilt, weil sie Selbstaufopferung und Selbstverleugnung erfordert. Geistliche Autorität bedeutet, das Kreuz auf sich zu nehmen und Jesus Christus nachzufolgen. Menschen, die sich der echten geistlichen Autorität des Heiligen Geistes unterwerfen, werden nicht zu einer geistlichen Autorität für andere. Sie wissen, dass sie dadurch Gott verdrängen würden.

Verantwortlichkeit

Unter vielen christlichen Gruppen herrscht die Ansicht vor, dass Christen sich vor jemandem „verantworten“ müssten, dass jemand Anderes die geistliche Autorität in ihrem Leben hätte. Sie weisen dann auf die Struktur der institutionellen Kirche als diese geistliche Autorität hin. Wir müssen diese Sichtweise in Frage stellen. Dass einer institutionellen Kirche Verantwortlichkeit zukommt, ist ein Mythos. So etwas existiert nicht. Wie sehr sind denn die Kirchenführer in das Leben eines Durchschnitts-Kirchenmitglieds involviert? Wie viel wissen sie denn eigentlich über deren Alltags-Aktivitäten? Die meisten Kirchenführer haben nur allgemeine Kenntnisse über ihre Mitglieder, mehr nicht. Wenn sie nicht einen Telefonanruf von einer besorgten Ehefrau bekämen oder sie über eine Verhaftung in der Zeitung lesen würden, wüssten die meisten Kirchenführer gar nicht, dass eines ihrer Mitglieder ein Alkohol- oder Drogenproblem hat.

Aber „Verantwortlichkeit“ geht weit darüber hinaus, die Probleme von anderen zu kennen. Wahre Verantwortlichkeit greift in die Privatsphäre hinein. Sie schließt gesetzliche Verantwortung mit ein. Das alles steckt in diesem Wort. Dann gibt es Gruppierungen wie die [Promise Keepers](#), die Männer dazu ermutigen zusammenzukommen und ihre innere Schwachheit mit anderen zu teilen. Sie nennen das auch „Verantwortlichkeit“. Was die Männer da aber teilen, ist Freiwilligkeit, aber mit dem Wort „Verantwortlichkeit“ wird das umschrieben. Wahre Verantwortlichkeit ist nicht Freiwilligkeit. Es ist Verpflichtung. Da hat man dann keine Wahl mehr. Diese „Sich gut fühlen-Gruppen“ kümmern sich genauso wenig um das Privatleben von anderen, wie sich die Kirchenführer um das Leben ihrer Mitglieder sorgen. Wir wollen es noch einmal wiederholen: Verantwortlichkeit ist ein Mythos. Christen handeln unabhängig und frei und fürchten sich davor, dass die wahren Motive für ihr Handeln ans Licht kommen.

Wahre geistliche Autorität ist unwandelnd. Man kann Gott nicht widerstehen, wenn man Ihm einmal sein Leben übergeben hat. Doch wenn die „Form der Verantwortlichkeit“ die wahre geistliche Autorität ersetzt, dann liegt die Verantwortung nicht mehr bei Gott, sondern bei den Menschen. Statt auf Gott zu reagieren und Seine transformierende Kraft zu erfahren, tendieren die Menschen dazu, zu verbergen, wer sie in Wirklichkeit sein und lernen zu täuschen, um ihre Sünden zu vertuschen.

Als Adam Satan nachgab und ihn als seine geistliche Autorität betrachtete, sah er sich selbst, wie er sich vor Gott verbarg und sich mit Blättern der Selbstgerechtigkeit bedeckte. „Verantwortlichkeit“, so wie sie heute definiert wird, ist nur eine andere Form der zeitgenössischen geistlichen Autorität, welche Gott von Seinem rechtmäßigen Platz verdrängen will. Sie birgt Scheinheiligkeit in sich und ist nur eine religiöse Form. Je stärker der Einfluss

des Menschen, umso mehr Scheinheiligkeit und religiöse Form wird es geben.

Die meisten Menschen haben tatsächlich keine Angst davor, was Gott darüber herausfindet, was sie sind und was sie tun. Sie fürchten sich davor, dass ihr Pastor das herausbekommt. Dies sollte ihnen das Ausmaß aufzeigen, wie weit die Menschen gegangen sind, um die wahre geistliche Autorität in ihrem Leben zu ersetzen.

Zusammenfassend kann man sagen: Geistliche Autorität im Neuen Testament steht für die Herrschaft des Heiligen Geistes in unserem Leben. Diese Herrschaft hat die Macht, uns in eine „neue Kreatur“ zu verwandeln.

2.Korinther Kapitel 5, Verse 14-15

14 Denn die Liebe Christi drängt uns (oder: hält uns in ihrer Gewalt), weil wir uns von der Überzeugung leiten lassen: EINER ist für alle gestorben, folglich sind sie allesamt gestorben; 15 und Er ist darum für alle gestorben, damit die, welche leben, nicht mehr sich selbst leben, sondern Dem, Der für sie gestorben und auferweckt ist.

Aber die Menschen haben die institutionelle Kirche gestaltet nach dem Muster der geistlichen Autorität des Alten Testaments, wo Gott nicht direkt in das Leben Seines Volkes eingriff. Die Folge davon ist, dass die moderne Christenheit nicht den Bruchteil von der transformierenden Kraft Gottes erfährt.

Part 2. The Application Of Spiritual Authority

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Husbands, Wives, and Synergy

(Note: Portions taken from a previous note entitled, "Spiritual Synergy.")

Genesis 2:18 KJV

And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.

This verse follows on the heels of the creation account found in chapter 1. Each thing God did was "*good*," that is, until He made man. We find here the first thing God did that was *NOT* good. He made man *alone*. This word "*good*" is an adjective used in the widest possible sense. It means "*favorable, beautiful, bountiful, cheerful,*" etc. In short, man could not find goodness as long as he was alone.

Far too often, the significance of this event is overlooked, seen instead as simply Adam's need for companionship. We typically read this passage, nod our heads in agreement, and then go on without really giving it much thought. But there is far more here to consider than simply the fact that Adam

was lonely. When God made woman, He made a being that was much more than simply a companion. With Eve, Adam had the potential to become good.

We learn here that God created Eve to be a “*help meet*.” The word “*help* (Hebrew: *help, aid, or succor*)” means just as it would seem: “to aid or assist.” Interestingly enough, the word “*meet*” means “*a part opposite, specifically a counterpart, or mate. It has the idea of something being set against (as in opposition) something else.*” Eve could *help* him become better by providing balance through an opposing viewpoint. Their collaboration and cooperation is known as “synergy.” It is the friction between these two opposites who work together for a solution that creates synergy.

We have all heard of the word “*synergy*.” At its most basic, it means “*unity [cooperation, working together]*.” But it goes way beyond unity. It carries with it the idea is that *the whole is greater than the sum of its parts*. The dictionary defines “*synergy*” as:

- “The interaction of two or more agents or forces so that the combined effect is greater than the sum of their individual effects.
- Cooperative interaction among groups, especially among the acquired subsidiaries or merged parts of a corporation, that creates an enhanced combined effect.”

Synergy comes from the Greek words “*sunergiā*,” which means “*cooperation*,” and *sunergos* [Strong’s 4904], which means, “*working together*.” The idea is that when things work together effectively, one and one can equal three. It means that combining forces produces a better product than that which could be produced separately.

The union of a husband and wife is the best example of synergy. Together, they can excel at work, raise a family, mind the affairs of a home, and do the work of the Lord. Their co-laboring allows them to be vastly more effective than if each were to attempt it on his own. But there is still more to the synergy that is produced by this union than mutual cooperation. Because they are opposites, they see and do things in their own way, so they bring into the union their own distinctiveness and differing points of view.

Just like the husband and wife relationship, Christians are not meant to be mere clones of one another, each working independently of the others. We are designed to be different. Imagine two people with conflicting opinions. One wants to eat Chinese and the other Mexican. But they only have one car and time is limited. They are both strong-willed and insist on meeting their own individual needs. In order for either of them to be fed, they must come up with a creative solution. This is where synergy begins: not with unity or agreement, but with the problem, the disagreement, diversity, or opposite. Synergy ends with unity. Synergy is also lost when a strong-willed individual insists on his own way or assumes control.

Spiritual authority in the husband and wife relationship should take the form of synergy. A husband is a fool when he ignores the benefits he can receive because of some misguided need to have control over his wife. When God created Eve from Adam's side, He demonstrated that she was his equal. In making Eve his opposite (i.e., "*help meet*" or "help through opposition"), God demonstrated that she was to be his balance. A wife is by her very nature a unique individual who is different and opposite in many respects. But she is also equal and therefore clearly able to provide balance for her husband. God did NOT make woman to simply provide companionship, an obedient

slave, or to experience forced conformity to man's will. He made her to make her husband *good*. In this type of relationship, one and one equals three. They are able to do much more together than they could ever accomplish apart.

On the other hand, a woman must learn to respect and submit herself to her husband. Keep in mind that submission is not a spiritual act but demonstration of respect for the natural order God established. Submission is especially difficult because most women grow up in a male-dominant environment. They learn early in life that getting their way requires force, manipulation, and sometimes even seduction. Though these tactics may be effective in the "real world," they can be (and usually are) devastating to a marriage. Communication is key. Probably your greatest challenge is to learn how to communicate rationally instead of through anger.

The ultimate objective of every husband is not to have his wife in subjection to him but that she would be in subjection to the authority of the Holy Spirit. This is true *spiritual authority*.

John The Baptist And Raising Children

Families are a mixture of both *spiritual* and *natural authority*. Paul recognized this when he wrote in 1 Timothy 3:2-5 that "*a bishop [is] one that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?)*" *Natural authority* is easy to achieve. Most parents struggle with *spiritual authority* in the home. *Spiritual authority* is NOT simply disciplining children into subjection but helping them to find and achieve the rule of the

Holy Spirit in their own lives.

At this point, we will revisit a subject we covered last year in our newsletter entitled, "What Children Wish Their Parents Knew."

To gain understanding into how we as parents should exercise *spiritual authority*, let's look to the example of John the Baptist.

Matthew 3:1-3 KJV

1 In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea,

2 And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

3 For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.

John 1:29 KJV

The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.

John the Baptist understood that his purpose was 1) to prepare the way of the Lord and 2) to introduce people to Christ. As Christian parents, this must also be our goal. The preparation of our children should not be to make them look good but to prepare them for God. Also, it is our job to introduce them to Jesus. And there's more.

John 1:20 KJV

And he [John the Baptist] confessed, and denied not; but confessed, I am not the Christ.

Far too often, some parents forget this important fact: they are not God. Instead of preparing their children for Christ, they take the place of Christ. Except the Christ they model seems more like the taskmasters of Egypt than the Savior who gave Himself for us. Whether their parents created such an environment intentionally or unintentionally, children who grow up in such an environment often grow into adults who blame, and therefore hate, God. At the very least, they often decide He is not the kind of God they want to continue serving on their own.

John 3:30 KJV

He [Jesus] must increase, but I [John the Baptist] must decrease.

As Jesus' authority begins to grow in our children's lives and they begin to submit to Him, there must be a corresponding and proportional diminishing of our *spiritual authority* and control. Children must see that our *spiritual authority* as parents does not supercede the authority of the Lord in their lives. As they grow older and more mature, they must be allowed to trust God and to fail just like we do. This will build spiritual confidence and maturity in them.

Too often, children are not allowed to make even small choices, much less the more important ones. Their environment sometimes resembles a military academy or, worse yet, prison, where parents work to control and manipulate their children right up until the time they leave home. Then they wonder why their children cast aside their values as though they were chains. Such children have never learned what serving Christ is all about, or even who He really is, all because their (possibly well-meaning) parents placed their own laws above teaching their children how to develop a relationship with the

Lord.

Many parents continually force their children to “do” right instead of helping them to “be” right. They force them to follow parental convictions and then wonder why they grow up to be shallow and phony.

Sometimes Christian parents get lost in rituals. They become overly preoccupied with what their children are doing. Are they reading the right materials? Are they dressed right? Are they watching TV, playing video games, listening to foul music, and talking with bad friends? As parents, we SHOULD be concerned with such things. But if that is the extent of our concern, then perhaps we are missing the most important things: namely, how our children are developing spiritually, socially, and emotionally. These things CANNOT be mandated to a child. They can only be suppressed. In other words, you cannot MAKE your child spiritual or socially balanced or emotionally mature. Parents can, by their actions, suppress these areas of their children’s lives from developing.

Revelation 2:1-5 KJV

1 Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks;

2 I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars:

3 And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted.

4 Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.

5 Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.

Here we find the danger of teaching our children structure rather than relationship. This church began out of a love relationship with Christ. They were His bride, and they loved Him. But somewhere along the way, they came to believe that it was what they did that pleased Him. Jesus commends them for all that they have done, but He tells them that they have “fallen” and are in need of repentance.

We face the real danger of creating children who are like the church of Ephesus. They do everything right but they have no love and passion for God. They misconstrue their “rightness” as relationship and then wonder why God is not active in their lives. They grow up to become pastors and leaders who create more churches like Ephesus, churches that do everything right but lack the power of God. It is our fault. When we create children in our own image (instead of God’s), they will, in turn, create churches after the manner in which they were raised. And we sit wondering where we went wrong.

Judges 16:18-21 KJV

18 And when Delilah saw that he had told her all his heart, she sent and called for the lords of the Philistines, saying, Come up this once, for he hath shewed me all his heart. Then the lords of the Philistines came up unto her, and brought money in their hand.

19 And she made him sleep upon her knees; and she called for a man, and she caused him to shave off the seven locks of his head; and she began to afflict him, and his strength went from him.

20 And she said, The Philistines be upon thee, Samson. And he awoke out of his sleep, and said, I will go out as at other times before, and shake myself. And he wist not that the LORD was departed from him.

21 But the Philistines took him, and put out his eyes, and brought him down to Gaza, and bound him with fetters of brass; and he did grind in the prison house.

Samson lost the things of God he possessed because he placed so little value on them. Many children who are raised in godly homes eventually cast aside the ways of their parents when they grow into adults. This happens because they have never come to see their parents' ways as anything more than routines.

Some children look forward to leaving home so they can escape the pressures of how they were raised. They want to escape the emptiness they feel as they go through the motions of family devotions and prayer. They want to escape the knowledge that they feel nothing in their hearts. But what they fail to realize is that when they leave home, they take their hearts with them. They may be able to escape the routines of their parents, but they cannot escape the emptiness in their hearts.

Galatians 4:19 KJV

My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you.

Children must come to see all the attributes of Christ in us that we want in them. In other words, they must be able to obtain forgiveness and second chances. We must demonstrate the ability to forgive seventy times seven because our Lord is kind, forgiving, and full of love. It is through love and forgiveness that they learn to see the Lord we serve. We must treat our

children with the same grace and mercy that we have found. Far too often, this is not the case. Far too often, we act as though the Lord we serve is a taskmaster: he cannot be pleased and is never satisfied with our best. As a result, we must reflect in our relationship with them the relationship they have, or one day will have, with the Lord.

The ultimate objective of parents is not to have children in subjection to them, but that their children would come to know and live in subjection to the authority of the Holy Spirit. This is true *spiritual authority*.

What About Submission

1 Peter 3:1 KJV

Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives

Ephesians 5:22 KJV

Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.

1 Peter 5:5 KJV

Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.

Demonstrating subjection and submission is showing respect to the *natural authority* God has established. But submission is NOT a *spiritual* act. If it were, then a woman whose unsaved husband wanted her to sacrifice her

salvation because of his selfish nature would be in sin if she disobeyed. But since her *spiritual authority* is found in the authority of the Holy Spirit, she does not violate her *spiritual authority* by obeying God. Let's be clear about this: an unsaved man does not exercise *spiritual authority* over his saved wife. His authority is a *natural authority*. Consequently, it is not uncommon to find the saved wives of unsaved men wrestling with the inner conflict of how to submit to their husbands, which they know God wants of them, while still serving God.

We must be careful not turn submission into a spiritual act. When we do that it becomes law, and women will submit, not out of love but out of some sense of duty or threat of sin. This tends to diminish a wife's effectiveness as his *help meet*. Christian wives submit to their husbands because that is the natural order that God established, and it is therefore pleasing to Him. But to make submission exclusively a wife's role is wrong. We are "*all [to] be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.*" Consequently, it should not be hard for a woman to submit to her husband and he to her. Submission should be our lifestyle.

Remember, example is the best teacher. Husbands teach their wives and children humility and submission by demonstrating it to them, and so does the wife. True submission and humility is not a result of a person with *spiritual authority* lording over us but because the nature of the Holy Spirit is at work in our lives causing us to be "*subject one to another, and... clothed with humility.*"

As for children, Paul writes, "*Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with*

promise;) *That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth. (Ephesians 6:1-3).*” The phrase “*in the Lord*” once again establishes that true *spiritual authority* comes from God. However, unlike other forms of submission, this form comes with a promise (i.e., “*that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth*”). It is interesting that failure to submit does not come with a threat of sin but a loss of promise. This is because submission is not a spiritual act but simply following the natural order God established.

By nature, children will obey their parents. It is a very natural thing. It does not require spirituality but discipline. In much our society, natural order has eroded into chaos. As a result, children do not obey their parents, mothers abort their children, and men abuse their families. Paul described this when he wrote that “*in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be without natural affection... (2 Timothy 3:1-3).*”

Christian men do not need to demand submission from their wives or subjection from their children. They foster the natural affection that is born in them. They do this through love and example. This does not mean that we do not discipline our children. It simply means that discipline must be combined with a demonstration from the parents of what they expect. Parents must demonstrate to their children what they will someday need to show to their own children.

What about submission to Christian leaders? Christian leaders often quote scriptures like the following:

Hebrews 13:7 KJV

Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you

the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation.

Christian leaders who demand or require submission are fools. People will freely submit to someone whom they respect. Paul writes that a true leader's "faith" will follow, and their "conversation (or manner of living)" draws respect. Christian leaders who feel the need to protect their authority are bullies, not leaders established by the Lord.

Quite often, Christian leaders will point to scripture concerning the apostles to explain the respect and submission they want to receive. So let's consider the scripture:

Acts 2:43 KJV

And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles.

Acts 5:11-15 KJV

11 And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things.

12 And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people; (and they were all with one accord in Solomon's porch.

13 And of the rest durst no man join himself to them: but the people magnified them.

14 And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women.)

15 Insomuch that they brought forth the sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and couches, that at the least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them.

It is quite clear throughout the scripture that people submitted and respected the apostles not because of a spiritual obligation but because of the quality of their lives. They did not submit because it was required of them. They submitted because of the God they saw in these men. This is the truest example of *spiritual authority* in Christian leaders.

Finally, a discussion on submission would not be complete without addressing wives unequally yoked with unbelievers. Wife, if your husband is unsaved, you must take whatever steps the Spirit of God instructs you to see that your children are raised in the fear of God. This may at times require you to go against your husband's wishes. If it comes to this, do so with the utmost humility and respect. Let him know how difficult it is for you to disobey his wishes. But don't forget that, just like your children, your husband needs God's love and salvation. He too has a soul. It would be much better for you to serve God with him rather than without him. Regardless of what people tell you, the answers for your questions can only be found in the leading of the Holy Spirit, but you can be sure that everyone around you will second-guess what you do.

The wife of a saved but lukewarm husband may have just as many challenges. Many women have found that by quitting their institutional churches and then starting or attending a house church, their husbands are forced to become the spiritual leaders God intended them to be. You must come to grips with this. Your husband will face many challenges to become a spiritual leader as long as you submit to the spiritual leadership of a pastor and you both attend a church that already has a spiritual leader (the pastor). Most men become lukewarm because they are unable to do that which God has called them to do (i.e., be the spiritual leader their own homes). Their wives have already made their choice of which leadership they are going to

follow (i.e., the pastor), so why expect from the husbands something they can never be while in an institutional church? Wives, you must decide which is more important: the comfort and enjoyment you get from submitting to your pastor or your husband's spiritual life. Remember, your union with your pastor is not a holy bond, but that which you have with your husband is. "*What therefore God hath joined together, let not man [or his wife] put asunder (Matthew 19:6).*"

The ultimate objective of every wife is not that she would be serving God in the church of her choice but that her husband would be in subjection to the authority of the Holy Spirit. This is true *spiritual authority*.

Spiritual Authority

Part 3. The Voice Of The Spirit

May 30, 2007

From Ron and Karen Schwartz,

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Revelation 2:26-29 KJV

26 And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations:

27 And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father.

28 And I will give him the morning star.

29 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

We are convinced that most Christians do NOT know how to hear the voice of the Spirit. Gleaning truths divined from the scripture is NOT the voice of the Spirit. Basing your decision on your understanding of biblical truths is NOT hearing the voice of the Spirit. Coming to a consensus through the counsel of others is NOT listening to the Spirit of God. Instead of hearing the voice of the Spirit, most Christians have come to accept their own presumptions, cultural values, and intellectual knowledge of the scripture to dictate the answers they desire and their spiritual direction. Though truth can sometimes be found in this way, it is a poor replacement for hearing what the Spirit has to say. Only by listening to the voice of the Holy Spirit can one be fully submitted to true *spiritual authority*.

Barriers and Structure

Today, we can be in contact with a church halfway around the world in an instant through telephone, Internet, or radio communications. As a result, we can be made aware of a need or a problem almost instantaneously. But when the Bible was written, information coming and going to a church could take months to reach its intended destination. By the time Paul became aware of a situation, months would pass before he could address it.

Therefore, the apostles often used different forms of structure, *Christian rulers*, and barriers to provide limits to control spiritual growth in the desired direction. Bear in mind that most of the epistles were directed toward the Gentile churches which, in many respects, did not have a grasp on Judeo-Christian values.

In addition to structure, most churches have man-imposed customs (barriers) that prevent them from being fully under the authority of the Spirit. Often

these barriers are based on biblically-founded truth or just good practical common sense.

Let's examine a few examples of barriers.

Let your women keep silence

Many seek to decipher direction for their lives and the church by reading the scripture and attempting to follow it like a step-by-step direction manual, but this can prove to be a faulty method, especially when trying to understand scriptures that seem to be contradictory to others. When there appear to be contradictions, it is important to understand the biblical themes behind each passage.

When you consider the scriptures as a whole, you begin to see certain themes occurring. I believe "biblical themes" are certain inalienable truths that the apostles embraced and were therefore reflected in their writing. For instance, Western civilization embraces justice and freedom. As a result, someone who embraces these values will unknowingly communicate these virtues in their writing and speech even though they may not directly address the subject. That is because these values are a part of the way we think and are therefore reflected in how we communicate. This is also true in the writings of the New Testament. There are certain ideological truths like love, grace, and faith that were embraced by the authors of the New Testament. These values were at times subtly communicated in their writing. They appear as themes in their writing. Therefore, when we read a statement that seems to be in conflict with other New Testament passages, we must look beyond the words and the Greek meaning, seeking to understand the theme of the concept as it is expressed in the **whole** of the New Testament.

1 Corinthians 14:33-35 KJV

33 For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints.

34 Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law.

35 And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church.

We have all read this passage and many of us have wrestled with how it can coexist with scriptures like, “*Everyone of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation (1 Corinthians 14:26).*” Or how can the scripture that says, “*every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoureth her head (1 Corinthians 11:5)*” fail to be in conflict with the one forbidding women to speak? These are only two, but there are many other scriptures that suggest women MAY speak in the church.

When considering all the scripture together, it becomes obvious that women should NOT be silent in the church. Then there are the practical questions that arise. For instance, if the primary churches of that era were “house churches,” then were not women already at home? So how do we reconcile these scriptures and the practical issues to 1 Corinthians 14:33-35?

Here is what we see: it comes back to themes. The theme that best explains this is that *the founders of the New Testament knew they did not have all the answers. So at times they implemented temporary structure to address a certain problem with the intention that eventually such structure would no*

longer be needed as the people grew in the maturity of the Spirit.

Structure

Structure can be anything that people impose to replace a function of the Holy Spirit. Paul and the other apostles at times imposed structure in the absence of spiritual maturity. They recognized that the church sometimes lacked spiritual maturity and therefore needed some form of “temporary” structure to shore up its weaknesses. We find it with the church at Corinth. They were not spiritually mature enough to operate under the spiritual authority of the Holy Spirit. So Paul imposed “temporary” rules for them, especially the women, to follow. The apostles found that temporary structure was sometimes necessary to bring discipline and order until the church matured enough spiritually so that the structure was no longer necessary. Structure was never intended to be a permanent condition of the church or individual Christians.

Let's be clear about this: the Holy Spirit working in the church does not produce structure. Structure may be a by-product of the Spirit moving on the Church (in that man imposes it due to spiritual immaturity in the people's use of spiritual gifts), but structure is something created by man, not the Holy Spirit.

Acts 6:1-4 KJV

1 And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministrations.

2 Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables.

3 Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business.

4 But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.

Even though both the apostles and Jesus taught that it was an imperial mandate to feed and care for the poor and that no person or group was above another, it wasn't being practiced here. Certain groups seemed to be receiving preferential treatment. Consequently, the apostles implanted a structure to address what is obviously the spiritual immaturity of the church.

When we consider the solution the apostles used to address this problem, we get an idea of how they used structure. Consider the quality of men. They were to be "*full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom.*" It is clear that structure should be intended to mimic as closely as possible the work and leadership of the Holy Spirit that it temporarily replaces. Consequently, church structure (and the hierarchy that developed under it) was never meant to be a permanent condition in the church but instead was meant to exist only until the church could reach a maturity level where it was no longer necessary.

Disagree? Then consider these next examples:

Ephesians 4:11-13 KJV

11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of

Christ:

Notice the word “*till*.” According to this scripture, ministry itself is a form of structure that was intended to be temporary. It is imposed upon the church “till” the Body of Christ grows into spiritual maturity, at which time it is no longer necessary. The scripture here explains that it is a temporary mimicry of the operation of the Holy Spirit.

So, there are two uncontroversial facts that define whether ministry is operating in accordance to the design established by the apostles:

- 1) Does it mimic the operation of the Holy Spirit?
- 2) Is it bringing the church closer to spiritual maturity and thus its own obsolescence?

Even the gifts of the Spirit are a temporary structure of the church. Both they and all ministries must eventually go away if the “operation of the Spirit” is to completely mature. Consider the following:

1 Corinthians 13:8-10 KJV

8 Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.

9 For we know in part, and we prophesy in part.

10 But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.

Do we believe that the church has reached a level of spiritual maturity (perfection) such that it no longer needs the structure of spiritual gifts or ministries? Absolutely not! Nor can we imagine what it would be like to have

every believer functioning at a level of spiritual maturity that makes structures no longer necessary, but it should nevertheless be our goal. The point is this: we must not universally impose upon all Christians a structure that was meant to address an issue in a single church or culture.

Titus 1:5 KJV

For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee:

Here we find that the need for elders were because of that which was “*wanting*,” or lacking, in the church. The institution of elders was not a measure of church maturity, but of its immaturity. The imposition of authority is the mark of underdevelopment.

Galatians 4:1-3 KJV

1 Now I say, That the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all;

2 But is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father.

3 Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world

We raise our children with Christian values, “imposing” a Christian structure in their lives. This structure becomes no longer necessary when they choose to serve the Lord. The structure is discarded in favor of a real relationship with God. The Christian structure we teach our children is nothing more than the same temporary replacement of the Holy Spirit that is used in the church.

When people impose structure in the church, they are treating the congregation as children. And just as structure stands in the way of children maturing, so does it in a church.

The “Pluses And Minuses” Of Structure

Structure can be a good thing. It can bring order to chaos. That is why teachings like Bill Gothard’s can be so valuable to *some* Christians. Structure is used well when 1) the Body of Christ receives proper teaching about why it is imposed and how they must mature so that such structure is no longer necessary, and 2) there is a clear understanding with all involved that it is temporary, and finally, 3) it is clearly understood that it is structure, not a spiritual ordinance. Also, when considering structure and its usefulness in the church, it is important to understand that there must be a plan for structure to go away. Call it an “exit strategy.”

For instance, if a structure is put in place to address a problem like the following:

1 Corinthians 14:23 KJV

If therefore the whole church be come together into one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those that are unlearned, or unbelievers, will they not say that ye are mad?

Structure might be imposed as follows:

1 Corinthians 14:27-28 KJV

27 If any man speak in an unknown tongue, let it be by two, or at the most by three, and that by course; and let one interpret.

28 But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church; and let him speak to himself, and to God.

Then as people grow spiritually and come to understand that spiritual gifts are subject to the individual, this form of structure may be no longer necessary.

But structure can also have the opposite affect: it can become a barrier if it is not discarded as the Body matures. We see this with the Old Testament. It was given as a temporary structure to provide us with examples of spiritual things, but it has now become a barrier to the Orthodox Jews, and many Christians as well. They refuse to discard it, and now it serves to prevent them from true spiritual maturity. The same thing is true concerning children. The control and structure we impose upon the lives of our children must diminish as they mature. If not, there will eventually be a clash of wills.

Structure is nothing more than the use of *natural authority* in the church. Whenever *natural authority* is used, it replaces the authority of the Holy Spirit and impedes spiritual development. If used improperly, it will suppress and even choke out spiritual growth. No amount of structure can replace the work of the Holy Spirit in the church.

A Note About Rule

Hebrews 13:17 KJV

Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.

Set aside for a moment that the word “*rule*” means to “*stand before,*” and therefore “*to lead,*” and consider it in the context of this scripture. Paul was

obviously referring to leaders who were responsible and accountable. Now consider the audience to whom he wrote.

Hebrews 5:11-13 KJV

11 Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing.

12 For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat.

13 For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe.

These Hebrew Christians (who, after experiencing salvation, chose to regress back into the law) had already rejected the *spiritual authority* of the Holy Spirit by reverting back to the law. These were people who were spiritually immature and could not hear the voice of the Holy Spirit or follow His leading. Strong leaders were necessary to break them free of the *natural authority* of the law. Paul's instructions were, therefore, that they obey their leaders and turn away from their fixation on Jewish law that held them back.

Not all churches want to grow spiritually. The vast majority of churches in the west actually enjoy their spiritual immaturity. They like not needing to prepare themselves for a meeting. They enjoy have no responsibilities other than attending and enjoying the show. They like the fact that they can pay some man to go to God and hear from God for them. In churches such as these there will always be a ruling class, just like Paul wrote of in Hebrews.

Consequently, just because Paul addressed the Hebrew church about their rulers does not mean that this is the way God wants it to be.

A Note On Authority

Authority is defined as “*the power to determine and settle disputes; the right of control and command; mastery in execution and performance; an expert on a subject.*” When we set people as authorities in our lives, we often set them up for failure. Most people rarely live up to our expectations of them because they are like us: imperfect. It is for this very reason that wives are often bitter toward their husbands. Their husbands fail to live up to their expectations of an authority. It is also the reason why children and parents often end up in a generation gap (i.e., parents quite often fail to measure up to the standard of an authority). It is also the reason why we often hear children/young people use the words hypocrite/hypocrisy when describing their parents. Being an authority carries with it difficult responsibilities.

The worst thing you can do to a person is to consider them an authority in your life. When you do this, they will cease to be your friend, partner, or spouse. The relationship that we should have with one another is one of friendship. You treat friends with respect and longsuffering. You submit to the will of your friends. In fact, as much as we would normally give to authorities, we give much more willingly to friends.

When we set others up as authorities – as with typical pastors, for instance - it forces them to “*act*” the part. They set themselves apart from others and sense the pressure to have all the answers. They feel the need to be flawless in order to preserve their rank. However, in a real body of believers, such would not be the case. A person with a pastoral gifting would play their part along with everyone else.

Setting people as spiritual authorities in our lives just does not work. It has resulted in multitudes being hurt and spiritually abused. It is responsible for church splits. It is even responsible for many becoming bitter toward their parents, their spouses, and the true authority of the Holy Spirit.

A Note On Apostles

Many Christians cannot get past the idea that the apostles functioned in a “ruling” capacity. They point to Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5) as examples of their authority. Ananias and Sapphira died because they chose to “*lie to the Holy Ghost (Acts 5:3)*,” not because they lied to Peter. They did not have to give their money to Peter. Their sin was in misrepresenting their gift to God. Peter was merely God’s oracle to expose their sin.

Paul offered one of the clearest descriptions of apostles when he wrote, “*And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision (Gal 2:9)*.” He describes the apostles as “*pillars*.” This word (Greek: *stulos*) actually means “*pillar*,” and therefore, figuratively, “*support*.” Paul did not describe them as rulers but as those who support others. This is important because *rulers* have command and control while one who *supports* enables others to command and control (e.g., their own lives).

Conclusion

Jesus had a message for the seven churches in Revelation. It is amazing how different they saw themselves from how Jesus saw them. The church at Laodicea thought they were “*rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing.*” But Jesus considered them “*wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.*” How could there exist such a disparity? No church believes itself wrong. The seven churches in Revelation believed they had the truth and were doing the will of God. They all seemed to be saying, “*I am spiritually rich.*” Had it not been for this letter being sent to these churches, would they have ever known Jesus’ assessment of them? Could they not hear the voice of the Spirit speaking to them?

The churches in Revelation thought they were obedient to the Spirit, but they were not. Not only had they had missed it, but many were in opposition to the direction of the Spirit. How is it that Christians and churches can be virtually in opposition to God and not know it? The answer is simpler than it may seem.

When a church uses any form of structure, it faces the danger of becoming “out of sync” with the Spirit like the churches Jesus addressed in the book of Revelation. *Nothing. Nothing! Nothing can replace the voice of the Holy Spirit in the church.* If structure must be imposed to address an issue, then *it must* be used only temporarily until the Body of Christ matures enough so that control can be turned over to the Holy Spirit as quickly as possible. Remember, structure is at best a crutch; it can never do the work of the Holy Spirit, nor should it be implemented with such an intention. Structure and other barriers will always block the voice of the Holy Spirit.

Churches today are just like these churches of 2,000 years ago. They are not listening! Most churches do NOT know how to hear the voice of the Spirit.

Instead we have allowed presumption, our cultural values, and our intellectual knowledge of the scripture to dictate our direction rather than actually hearing what the Spirit is saying. Most ministers serve only to convolute things by creating more noise so that it is virtually impossible to hear the voice of the Spirit today. Instead of getting us to hear from God, they have succeeded in replacing the voice of the Spirit in the church.

It is the voice of the Holy Spirit in the church that is true *spiritual authority*, NOT the voices of those in leadership positions. For the church to mature fully to the stature of Christ, these leaders must step aside and yield to the influence and direction of the Holy Spirit in God's people.

Spiritual Authority

Part 4. Case Studies In Spiritual Authority

June 4, 2007

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Case Study #1: The First Family Unit

Genesis 3:1-6 KJV

1 Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?

2 And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden:

3 But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die.

4 And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die:

5 For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.

6 And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.

What does this scripture say about *spiritual authority* and the family? As defined in an earlier part of this series, *spiritual authority* is the authority of the Spirit of God in our lives. Our goal should not be to replace the authority of the Spirit in our families but to help enable it. Only then are we successful parents and spouses. The *spiritual authority* in this passage came from God who instructed Adam about the consequence of death for disobedience, and the promise of life for obedience.

The family unit is not a hierarchy of *spiritual authority* but of *natural authority*. Paul tells us that “*the head of the woman is the man (1 Corinthians 11:3).*” This is a “physical” hierarchy.

Matthew 19:5-6 KJV

5 And [Jesus] said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh?

6 Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.

The family must be viewed as a single “physical” body, not two individual bodies. As a result, it is able to function well and adapt in our physical universe. Most wives intuitively understand the natural order of the family.

And because this hierarchy pertains to the natural order, she is able to have her own unique fulfilling spiritual relationship with God.

What happened with Adam and Eve is very common. Like most wives, Eve's opinion of Adam was colored by his *natural authority* over her. She saw him not as a spiritual being but as the "physical" man that he was. The Serpent approached Eve not from a position of *natural authority* but as a *spiritual authority*. There was no way that Adam could compete with that. Even though he knew the mind of God on the issue, Eve had more respect for someone coming from a position of *spiritual authority* than one coming from a position of *natural authority*. Adam lost out because of his *natural authority*. Consider the series of events that took place to bring about the fall of mankind.

- 1) A foreign authority replaced Adam as the head.

God didn't tell Eve not to eat of "*the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 2:17)*." He told Adam just before He made Eve. It was Adam's responsibility to protect his home by keeping his family away from this tree. The Serpent knew that Adam would not disobey God, so he approached the wife. Eve listened to the Serpent with great interest. The Serpent challenged Adam and made him question whether he heard from God and understood God correctly. Up to this point, there is no indication that Eve was unhappy or unsatisfied with her husband until the Serpent planted the seed.

Eve found herself between two men. One was simply her husband, a person who exercised natural authority. But the other was obviously a wise spiritual leader ("*the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field*"). He was obviously a spiritual authority. Why shouldn't Eve listen to the Serpent? He

talked with impressive wisdom and authority, and her husband was obviously spiritually inferior. The serpent spoke as though he knew what God wanted and intended. Perhaps her husband was jealous and just wanted to hold her back.

Eve became dissatisfied with Adam's leadership and lost respect for him when someone else injected himself into the family as a *spiritual authority*. The new spiritual authority implied that Adam's leadership kept Eve from becoming like God. Adam was limiting her spiritual development. Adam was clearly holding her back. Therefore, when the Serpent promised to fulfill her spiritual aspirations, she promptly spiritually divorced her husband and took the headship of the Serpent. When Eve accepted the spiritual authority of the Serpent, she divorced herself from the *spiritual authority* of God and the *natural authority* of her husband.

Just like Eve, many women are unsatisfied with their husbands. They see their husbands for the *natural authority* they have that God gave them, and they want them to be *spiritual authorities* like their pastors. *For most men, this will never be the case. Nor was it meant to be.* Most pastors inadvertently take the position of the Serpent by superceding the *natural authority* of the man and assuming the *spiritual authority* meant for God.

Like Eve, most wives have pastors who seem wiser and more spiritual than their husbands. Most wives regard their pastors in much the same way Eve did the Serpent. And, like Eve, they lose respect for their husbands because of their pastors. Even knowing the esteem and admiration that women have for them, most pastors have little concern that many women have replaced them as their "head." Most pastors enjoy it. This unholy union is nothing short of spiritual adultery.

What should women do? First, eliminate your husband's competition. Your husband is to be your only *natural authority*, and God is to be your only *spiritual authority*. Men know that they cannot compete with pastors, so they don't try. They give up as they see you embrace another. Stop going to an institutional church where your husband is replaced as your head. Find a home group or start one of your own where your family can grow and where your husband can be the head of your family as he is meant to be.

2) The Serpent enticed Eve by promising that if she listened to him instead of her husband she would become godlike.

This is a common event in most churches. Women perceive spiritual growth from submitting to their pastors. They conclude that their husbands are not spiritual and do not know God – at least not like their pastor. This eventually causes them to complain to their pastor about their husbands, which causes yet further division. Instead of being directed back to the headship of their husband they are consoled.

The damage done here affects not only their husbands but God as well. When a woman submits to the authority of a pastor, she breaks free of both the authority of her husband and of God. It is comparable to weeds growing in a garden sucking the nutrients from the vegetables. As you and your pastor grow together, you steal from your husband that which he needs to grow: his leadership. You essentially sacrifice his spiritual life for your own.

Women who do this live off the spiritual life of the pastor, not the Holy Spirit. Their spiritual growth takes place when they are around him and other spiritual leaders they have selected to follow. Eve was looking for the fast

track to her spiritual development and understood that this is what the Serpent offered. She truly believed that she had the answer. So “*she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her.*” As a result, they both died. You may believe that you have the answer for your family’s spiritual development, but if it is submitting to the *spiritual authority* of a man, thereby sacrificing the leadership of your husband or his spiritual development, you are as deceived as Eve. Healthy spiritual development never divides the family.

3) Adam did not assert himself as the guardian and head of his family but allowed a foreign influence to govern his home.

Adam was also at fault. He could have challenged the Serpent’s influence with the Word of God. This is what Jesus did when He was tempted. Adam could have fought for his family.

Did you ever wonder why Eve was at this tree in the first place? Eve was tempted because she was somewhere that she should not have been. If Adam believed God that the tree would bring about her death, why didn’t he take Eve away from the tree? Adam could have prevented the temptation, but he didn’t. Instead, he assumed the submissive role of the female, like his wife Eve, and listened to the Serpent.

This is exactly what happens in institutional churches and many house churches that have simply recreated the institutional church in the home. Men are made feminine. They become *another* wife and submit themselves to the system. They allow their wives to go to churches where they will be tempted to take on the headship of someone other than her husband. Most men are simply confused by the system. The current church system that

elevates pastors/priests has been around for centuries. Most men don't question the authority of the pastor. There are vast numbers of men who would like to be the pastors of their homes but are either told they are not qualified or they do not know how to go about it. So they sit idly by as the Serpent moves in, assumes the headship over their wives, convinces the wives to disregard their husbands' instructions, and breaks down the family unit.

Men must understand that they, not their pastors, have been called by God to be the heads of their homes. Institutional churches are designed to replace the husband and thereby gain control of the family. Just like the Serpent, they do it through the wife. Christian men must stop acting like submissive wives when it comes to providing leadership for the family and assume the role God designed them to fulfill. They must take their families away from the spiritual influences that would

- 1) replace them as the heads of their families and
- 2) replace God as their spiritual authority.

Case Study #2: The First Church

There is a predisposition among Christian teachers to presume that most Christians want to grow in their relationship with God. This is simply not the case. Most evangelism is done utilizing the tools of fear and trepidation to compel sinners to repent. How does this translate into spiritual aspirations? It doesn't. Their salvation experience is enough to satisfy their fears of eternal torment and thereby breeds apathy and compromise.

John 9:28-29 KJV

28 Then they reviled him, and said, Thou art his disciple; but we are Moses' disciples.

29 We know that God spake unto Moses: as for this fellow, we know not from whence he is.

The Jews were “born” into their relationship with God, and for many that was enough. This is not unlike contemporary Christians who are also “born again” into a relationship with God. Many are content with simply being saved. Additionally, the Jews measured their spiritual growth by their knowledge of the scripture, not in the depth of their actual spiritual development. It was this knowledge that prevented them from seeing God when He came to them. Once again, this is not unlike contemporary Christians who have come to know God through books, study aids, seminars, and teachers. These manmade opinions and influences are enough to satisfy their conviction to grow spiritually without the need to actually grow. They allow Christians to satisfy their innate need for spiritual development by inflating their minds while they continue to live in the darkness of sin.

Christians pursue God if they truly want to grow spiritually. The light of God’s Spirit exposing the darkness in their lives does not make them uncomfortable.

None Dare Call It Idolatry

Exodus 19:16-18 KJV

16 And it came to pass on the third day in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; so that all the people that was in the camp trembled.

17 And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet with God;

and they stood at the nether part of the mount.

18 And mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the LORD descended upon it in fire: and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly.

In this passage, we find that when God descended before the people, they feared and trembled. Who enjoys being afraid? Who enjoys being terrified? No one.

Exodus 20:18-20 KJV

18 And all the people saw the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking: and when the people saw it, they removed, and stood afar off.

19 And they said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die.

20 And Moses said unto the people, Fear not: for God is come to prove you, and that his fear may be before your faces, that ye sin not.

The solution they found for their fear was to put someone between them and God so God would no longer be a threat to them. By placing Moses in between God and them they essentially made Moses into an idol, and idolatry breeds more idolatry.

Exodus 32:1-4 KJV

1 And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him.

2 And Aaron said unto them, Break off the golden earrings, which are in the ears of your wives, of your sons, and of your daughters, and bring them unto me.

3 And all the people brake off the golden earrings which were in their ears, and brought them unto Aaron.

4 And he received them at their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool, after he had made it a molten calf: and they said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.

Here the Hebrews built their idol at the foot of the mountain that burned with fire, that sounded with voices and trumpets, and where the ground shook. They built their idol in the presence of God. When Christians hide behind pastors or priests, they plant seeds of idolatry. As that seed grows, they eventually find that, like the Hebrews, what they are worshipping is a substitute for God. They are like the Hebrews who stood in the presence of God but lifted up a man and listened to him rather than God.

Many churches/Christians use the ideal of *spiritual authority* to justify having a pastor/priest stand between them and God just as the Hebrews did. There is a problem with this. When anyone stands between God and His people, God's people don't come to know whom God really is. Consequently, they must use their imaginations to define and describe God. As a result, they create God in their own image. They stand in the presence of God while creating golden calves and assume the golden calves are God.

In the 3,500 years since the first golden calf was fashioned, God's people – His church – have continued to set men between them and God. As a result, they misunderstand who God is and mistake others for God.

Perhaps no other culture has ever embraced their religion more strongly than the ancient Jews. For 1,500 years, their culture and government was symbiotically intertwined with their religion. Their educational system blended religion and academics. If any culture truly knew the God they worshipped, it would be them. Yet when the God they worshipped came to meet them, they had no idea who he was.

John 1:10-11 KJV

10 He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not.

11 He came unto his own, and his own received him not.

Many Christians want to revert back to the *spiritual authority* of the Old Testament. They liked having men represent them to God as their priests. If they don't have to go to God, then their sin will not be exposed and their conscience will be clear. Consequently, churches everywhere put men as their priests/pastors in a position between them and God. These men insulate them from the prying eyes of the Holy Spirit. It is easy to sit in a church and listen to someone preach, and it satisfies the need to submit to God even if little is actually accomplished. The pastors/priests have no idea the lives that their congregations lead, and this is the way people like it. But if God stood before them, there would be no hiding their sin.

Hebrews 4:13 KJV

Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.

Most people are under the delusion that they attend church to be in the presence of God, but that is not the case. God is saying to most churches,

“Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me (Revelation 3:20).” Most churches have built walls (of men) not to surround themselves with the presence of God but to hide from Him. Most churches serve to exalt men and shield the people from God. It has been like that since the beginning:

Genesis 3:8 KJV

And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden.

Since the first family and the first church, God’s people have been setting men in positions as *spiritual authority* and then wondering where they went wrong. You cannot put men between you and God and believe that you have a clear understanding of who God is and what He wants. John wrote, *“This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil (John 3:19).”* The huddled masses in churches today hide in the shadow (darkness) of their pastors because they do not want to be seen of God. Like Adam and Eve, they are hiding from the presence of God. Most churchgoers do not want God. They want their substitute. They want their golden calf. It is far less threatening. They know their church is without God’s power. They know their church is dead or dying. They know their church is just a façade of what the bible describes. But that’s okay. It is far better than the alternative: abiding in the presence of God.

Spiritual Authority

Part 5. Power Over Serpents And Scorpions (Or Just A Broken Clock)

June 15, 2007

Ron and Karen Schwartz

Conventional teaching on spiritual authority holds that parents have authority (power) over their children, husbands over wives, pastors over their congregations, and Christians over the powers of darkness. Therefore, many Christians associate spiritual authority with scriptures like:

Luke 10:19 KJV

Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you.

Revelation 2:26-27 KJV

26 And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations:

27 And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father.

The popular notion is that Christians are empowered with authority and might over the forces of darkness. But consider this: today, more than at any other time in history, the influence of Christianity, the building of churches, and the freedom of evangelism has reached throughout the world. The influence of Christianity is everywhere. Yet even though churches number in the hundreds of thousands and Christians in the 100's of millions it seems that contemporary Christianity is powerless to prevent the spread of sin and decadency of our societies that continues to spiral down to hell. If Christians truly have power over the powers of darkness, why does the corruption of sin and immorality that blankets this world continue to spread and flourish at an

unimaginable pace? Why do Christians appear to be “powerless” to change this world?

The following scripture is perhaps the most over-used and least understood scripture that pertains to spiritual authority:

Ephesians 6:12 KJV

For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

If Christians have been given power over “serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy,” why then is there a need to “wrestle?”

This word “wrestle” (Greek: pale) describes a very popular sport of the ancient Greeks. It was not that dissimilar to today’s wrestling. It was a contest in which one contestant attempted to force his opponent out of a circle or force him to the ground. It was very physical, and it required discipline, extensive training, resolve, and tenacity. It was not something for the careless or faint at heart. The Greeks would train and condition young boys their entire life to prepare them for this sport. Preparation was considered lifelong.

When you put the scripture, “we wrestle,” together with the scripture, “power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy,” you begin to understand that the spiritual authority Christians can have “against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, [and] against spiritual wickedness in high places” is not given carte blanche to just any Bible-toting believer. Like the Greeks who trained their entire life for this contest, spiritual authority over “serpents and scorpions, and over all the

power of the enemy” is for them who have conditioned and trained their spiritual lives to be qualified for this fight. Believers do this through obeying the discipleship described by Jesus, and through “crucifying the flesh” as described by Paul. The measure of spiritual authority a believer has is directly proportional to the degree that they are submitted to the Lord. They must set aside sin and personal ambitions and become obedient to God’s Spirit. And like the Greek sport, this training and discipline must be considered lifelong and life changing.

If a Greek had not conditioned his body to wrestle he would not be qualified for his contest. In the same manner, most Christians are spiritually unconditioned because of their apathy, compromise, and the sin in their lives. They are simply unqualified to “wrestle” against “the power of the enemy.” This explains why the vast majority of Christians are “powerless” to change the world around them - they have never experience true spiritual authority, and they are therefore no match for the powers of darkness.

Spiritual authority as it pertains to spiritual warfare is almost completely superficial among Western Christians. They are almost all talk. Some Christians talk about being prayer warriors or participating in spiritual battles. Are these battles real? Let go back to Paul’s analogy of skilled and conditioned wrestlers. What chance would an under developed, weak, untrained, and apathetic person have in a wrestling match against a tested, conditioned, trained, and seasoned opponent who is full of resolve? None! The truth is that very few Christians know what it is to wrestle against spiritual darkness, and that is the reason for the pandemic of sin and corruption in our society. Contemporary Christianity’s idea of spiritual authority/ spiritual warfare is a joke among the true powers of spiritual darkness.

Acts 19:13-16 KJV

13 Then certain of the vagabond Jews, exorcists, took upon them to call over them which had evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth.

14 And there were seven sons of one Sceva, a Jew, and chief of the priests, which did so.

15 And the evil spirit answered and said, Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye?

16 And the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, and overcame them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded.

In this scripture, we are told of Jews who tried to use the spiritual authority they saw demonstrated in Paul's life. But they found out that the authority Paul used was not simply "in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost (1 Thessalonians 1:5)."

Christians who believe they have power over the forces of darkness and to rule nations but do not train and condition their spiritual lives will never actually experience that power. They will go through their lives talking about it, reading books about it, and hearing endless sermons about it, but it will remain nothing more than a fairytale.

Most Christians breeze over the words of Jesus that pertain to discipleship, laying down their lives, and being crucified with Him, but lay hold of His words that pertain to moving mountains, commanding demons, and works of miracles. You cannot disconnect Jesus' teaching on discipleship from His promise of power. They are inseparable.

Daniel 10:1-14 KJV

1 In the third year of Cyrus king of Persia a thing was revealed unto Daniel, whose name was called Belteshazzar; and the thing was true, but the time appointed was long: and he understood the thing, and had understanding of the vision.

2 In those days I Daniel was mourning three full weeks.

3 I ate no pleasant bread, neither came flesh nor wine in my mouth, neither did I anoint myself at all, till three whole weeks were fulfilled.

8 Therefore I was left alone, and saw this great vision, and there remained no strength in me: for my comeliness was turned in me into corruption, and I retained no strength.

9 Yet heard I the voice of his words: and when I heard the voice of his words, then was I in a deep sleep on my face, and my face toward the ground.

10 And, behold, an hand touched me, which set me upon my knees and upon the palms of my hands.

11 And he said unto me, O Daniel, a man greatly beloved, understand the words that I speak unto thee, and stand upright: for unto thee am I now sent. And when he had spoken this word unto me, I stood trembling.

12 Then said he unto me, Fear not, Daniel: for from the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand, and to chasten thyself before thy God, thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words.

13 But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days: but, lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me; and I remained there with the kings of Persia.

14 Now I am come to make thee understand what shall befall thy people in the latter days: for yet the vision is for many days.

We find here an example of the “wrestling” about which Paul wrote. Daniel continued in prayer for three full weeks. How many Christians have

conditioned their faith like Daniels, disciplined their bodies to be able to fast for weeks, and develop the spiritual tenacity necessary to continue in prayer (for weeks if necessary) simply to understand a dream? Contrast this example of three weeks of fasting and prayer to the “name it and claim it” advocates who suggest that spiritual authority is simply commanding spirits. These advocates often make statements like, “The enemy is already defeated.” To this we say, “Look around at the prevailing victory of sin in this world, the compromise in your church, and the spiritual attacks in your own life. If Satan, our great enemy, is defeated, he sure does not know it or think so.”

Revelation 12:12-13, 17 KJV

12 Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.

13 And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child.

17 And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.

If Satan is defeated, as many claim, then why is he able to “make war” with the saints? This scripture does not describe a beaten enemy but one that is bent on winning – one who believes that he can win! Does Satan believe that he will lose? No! He knows that Jesus will come again for His own – for a Church that is without “spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; [and] holy and without blemish (Ephesians 5:27).” So if Satan can rid the world of every true Christian, and corrupt those that remain there will be no one for whom to return. He believes that he can destroy Christians by convincing them that the

false Christianity they embrace is real, by sweeping them away in the torrents of sin of this current age, by convincing them that compromise is Christianity, and through the deception that apostasy is Christianity adapted to modern culture. We believe that one of Satan's greatest deceptions has been to convince Christians that he is already defeated and there is therefore nothing left for them to do but to enjoy their religion.

Christians often point to the story of David and Goliath and the little stone that brought down the giant. We must remember that the little stone was propelled by a young man who was fully submitted to God. The power of God in the lives of His people is fully proportional to the degree that their lives are submitted to Him. You cannot assume that a man is submitted to God just because he is involved in ministry. Often, just the opposite is true.

Contemporary Christian leaders have made careers out of ministry. They have conditioned subordinate Christians into supporting them, and they use their positions of authority in order to bully their objectives into reality. These are not men submitted to God. They are slaves to their ministry/empires.

They do they have God's authority as evidenced by the lack of power in their lives.

David was not a leader, a king, or Captain of the army when He brought down the giant, yet many great men, including the king, were present when he did. He was just a young man who had no ambition other than to love God. Of all the great men who were with Him, it was he alone who was fully submitted to God, and consequently it was he who demonstrated the power of God. The great men and their leaders could only stand by and watch. They had the power of men and power over men, but they had not the authority of God's Spirit. Today is no different. Great Christian leaders surround us. They are everywhere. But where are those who have the spiritual authority of the Lord?

There are many who pretend to be apostles and prophets but what have they to offer other than hype? Only people who submitted their lives to the Lordship of the Holy Spirit are trained, conditioned, and qualified to wrestle with the powers of darkness. These are they who have crucified their lives with Christ and demonstrate His authority.

Broken Clocks

It has been said that a broken clock is accurate twice a day. The rest of the time it is... well, wrong. What if I had a broken clock but I believed that it was functioning properly simply because I could point to the fact that it was correct twice daily? That would be ridiculous, would it not?

Most Christian leaders lack God's power and His spiritual authority in their lives. They are powerless to combat the assault of spiritual darkness all around them. They are leaders but not of God's army. They are leaders of their own making, rulers of their own ministry-kingdom, and pretenders who claim to be authorities of the Spirit but are, instead, inflated by their own egos. Most Christian leaders are little more than broken clocks. There are accidentally right once in awhile.

Some of these leaders claim to be prophets, warriors of the Spirit, yet as prophets what have they really changed? If the church is maturing as a result of their ministry, how do they explain the growing compromise, apathy, and spiritual apostasy among God's people? How do they explain a church that reflects more and more of this world's values? They prophesy about God raising up an army of overcomers, yet their neighborhoods, cities, and countries are being overcome by more and more gross sin. They're all talk. The truth be known, they are prophets/pretenders of their own making. They

are broken clocks that think they are functioning properly. They are not authorities of the spirit and have no real spiritual authority. Oh yes, they sound great, and they fill the pages of the Internet with their prophecies. But they are nothing more than a clock that is right once in a while.

Most of the men who claim to be spiritual leaders lack the spiritual authority necessary to combat the forces of darkness and effect change because they lack submission to the Spirit of God. They are too self-consumed with their own ministries to notice what God is really doing. If they are ever to know true spiritual authority and become effective weapons for God, they will need to sacrifice what they value the most: their ministry-kingdoms. With most Christian leaders, their ministries have become their idols. It is their ministries that they cherish, protect, and serve. It is their god. Most Christian leaders want to take credit for any good that happens but place the blame for sin and apostasy on others.

The Weapons Of Our Warfare

2 Corinthians 10:3-5 KJV

3 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh:

4(For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;)

5 Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ

Paul writes, "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh." In

other words, even though we live in this world, our warfare is not of this world. Our weapons are not the same as worldly weapons. The way we wage war should not use the same tactics the world uses.

Most Christian leaders lack the spiritual submission to the Holy Spirit in their own lives that is necessary in order to experience true spiritual authority over the powers of darkness. So rather than use the true weapons of the spirit to battle our spiritual enemy, they have embraced the weapons of this world to battle their physical enemies.

The weapons we choose to use (whether physical or spiritual) are determined by the values we embrace. Our values determine our objectives, which in turn determine our actions and the weapons we choose. Think of it like this:

If I value morality, then seeing morality in my culture will become my objective. To achieve this objective, I will choose the weapons of politics to try to change society. I will use every natural means at my disposal to boycott businesses and oppose politicians that do not support my objective. I will join or start political action groups like the Moral Majority. Therefore, when morality is the value then politics is the answer, and my weapons of choice will tend to be physical weapons of this world.

If my value is to grow the size of my church, then making my church more appealing to other Christians becomes my objective. Therefore, I'll look to marketing for my answers. The value of church growth (in terms of size) is the objective of every church I know. It is nothing short of lust. To achieve this goal, churches have learned to embrace capitalism and marketing. The rules of marketing teach us to determine what the public wants and fashion the product to meet the demands of the public. So this is exactly what churches

do. Just like the housing market, churches remodel their buildings to make them more marketable. They create fast-paced, entertaining services in aesthetically appealing auditoriums. They have great music from (semi-) professional musicians and singers. Everything about marketing has to do with the building and entertainment. In marketing, it is the physical - not the spiritual - that is important. Therefore, when numbers or church size is the value, then marketing is the solution, and once again the weapons I choose are physical.

If I value recognition, then status becomes my objective. To achieve this objective, I will pursue credentials. This may include a degree from Bible College or seminary. It will cause me to pursue a title like Doctor or Reverend. It will cause me to market myself in the broadest possible sense, to pursue speaking engagements, etc. The more recognition I get, the more I will pursue it. Once again, we find that not only do our values determine our actions but also what weapons – whether physical or spiritual – we will use.

Consequently, we find that values drive our objectives and determine our actions. Many Christian leaders lack the weapons of the Spirit because they have taken up the weapons of this world. Consider the following example:

3 John 9 KJV

I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not.

The Greek word for “preeminence” here simply means, “to strive to be first.” It carries with it the sense of “loving it (the position of being first).” Here John

describes a Christian leader who desired and enjoyed attention and status so much that he prevented other Christian leaders from coming to his church, even the apostles. This man was not a sinner, but a church leader who became misguided. He valued status. He valued recognition. Therefore, his objective was to gain more. Other Christian leaders, even the apostles, eventually became his enemies.

Many pastors preach on this verse to their members but fail to see how they are guilty of preeminence. It is important to remember that, like “Diotrephes,” most Christian leaders are men of sacrifice. They usually have good intentions and a heart that desires to please God. But their love for self, for attention, for status, and for credentials is greater. It makes them unsatisfied with the size of their church – no matter how big it is – because once they embrace “preeminence,” greatness is never enough. Because their values are non-spiritual values (i.e., church size and recognition), they turn to non-spiritual weapons. The actions they take are not based on spiritual objectives but their own carnal nature. This is important because most Christians assume that their pastor’s good intentions means that they hear from God and are following His will. Nothing could be further from the truth. Most pastors are driven by worldly values and use the weapons of this world to achieve them.

Now here’s the twist:

Preeminence drives men to eliminate competition, or those who could become competition. You find a clear example of this in contemporary Christianity. It’s the old twisted concept of spiritual authority touted by Christian leaders everywhere. It sets forth that parents have spiritual preeminence over children, men have spiritual preeminence over their wives,

and pastors have spiritual preeminence over their congregations. In this model, Christian leaders use what they call spiritual authority to eliminate everyone other than themselves as important. Therefore, only their values and objectives are important. The real value (treasure) they embrace is preeminence. Preeminence is just one example of Christians using spiritual weapons to destroy one another.

The Danger Of Spiritual Warfare

If Satan's kingdom in this earth is such a threat, why make spiritual authority so difficult to achieve? Why not simply give Christians the ability to command spirits? Why make it a wrestling match? Here's why: God once gave a being the greatest spiritual authority possible without cost. That being was Satan. God made him with beauty, power, and authority. That authority was not earned. It cost him nothing.

Ezekiel 28:13-17 KJV

13 Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God; every precious stone was thy covering, the sardius, topaz, and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, and the carbuncle, and gold: the workmanship of thy tabrets and of thy pipes was prepared in thee in the day that thou wast created.

14 Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth; and I have set thee so: thou wast upon the holy mountain of God; thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire.

15 Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee.

16 By the multitude of thy merchandise they have filled the midst of thee with violence, and thou hast sinned: therefore I will cast thee as profane out of the

mountain of God: and I will destroy thee, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire.

17 Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness: I will cast thee to the ground, I will lay thee before kings, that they may behold thee.

From this we know what happened to Satan. Satan did not value God or his relationship with God. Like many Christian leaders, he valued power and influence. He used his power and influence to draw to himself “the third part of the stars of heaven (Revelation 12:4),” and, in effect, divide heaven. As a result, “there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him (Revelation 12:7-9).”

Satan used spiritual weapons to battle God’s spiritual army for his own end. Does anyone really believe that God will allow this to happen again? Therefore, in order for Christians to exercise spiritual authority over the powers of darkness, God requires that they be fully submitted to Him. In effect they have crucified their “self” on their cross and therefore have no personal ambitious that would lead to them using the weapons of this world.

It is ambition that disqualifies most Christian leaders. Like Satan, most Christian leaders are bent on self-promotion. They draw attention to their “self” by naming their ministry to make it distinct and unique, because they are nothing without a following. They resort to marketing to openly promote their ministries, and to grow their influence. They create titles to identify their

credentials. Remember, Satan was a good servant of God right up until the time he fell. If he could be tempted by misplaced values, what chance do Christian leaders have who toy with the values of this world? What we find is that the vast majority of Christian leaders have little to NO spiritual authority over the powers of darkness.

If we are to know true spiritual authority, we must lay down the things of this life we value (i.e., greatness, power, influence, credentials). Otherwise, like Satan, they will continue to use their spiritual weapons on each other.

Finally, should we as Christians fear the powers of darkness? Should we fear the war that Satan wages against us? Satan's warfare is directed at "self." If we conquer "self" first, then there will be nothing left for him to battle.

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Spiritual Synergy: God's Design For Man

October 11, 2006

From Ron Schwartz

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Genesis 2:18 KJV

And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will

make him an help meet for him.

This verse follows on the heels of the creation account found in chapter 1. Each thing God did was “*good*.” Yet here we find the first thing God did that was *NOT* good. He made man *alone*. This is the first time that God demonstrated how essential synergy is to man’s existence. This word “*good*” is an adjective used in the widest possible sense. It means “*favorable, beautiful, bountiful, cheerful, etc.*” In short, man could not find goodness alone. He needed others. So God created for him a “*help meet*” for him.

Eve was the “*help (help, aid, or succor) meet*” for Adam. Interestingly enough, the word “*meet*” means “*a part opposite, specifically a counterpart, or mate. It has the idea of something being set against something else.*” The man could now become better because he had a companion who was his opposite or, you might say, his balance. From this, we see that God never intended man to operate alone. He intended that men should have others in their lives who are their opposites. It is the friction between these two opposites that creates synergy.

We have all heard of the word “*synergy*.” At its most basic, it means “*unity [cooperation, working together].*” It carries with it the idea is that *the whole is greater than the sum of its parts*. The dictionary defines “*synergy*” as:

- “The interaction of two or more agents or forces so that their combined effect is greater than the sum of their individual effects.
- Cooperative interaction among groups, especially among the acquired subsidiaries or merged parts of a corporation, that creates an enhanced combined effect.”

Synergy comes from the Greek words “*sunergiā*,” which means “*cooperation*,” and *sunergos* [strong's 4904], which means, “*working together*.” The idea is that when things work together effectively, one and one can equal three. It means that combining forces produces a better product than that which could be produced separately.

The original union of husband and wife is the best example of synergy. Together, they can excel at work, raise a family, mind the affairs of a home, and do the work of the Lord. Their co-laboring allows them to be vastly more effective than if each were to attempt it on his own. But there is more to the synergy that is produced by this union than mutual cooperation. They are opposites. They see and do things differently and therefore bring into the union their own uniqueness.

Like a husband and wife, we are not meant to be mere clones of one another, each working independently of the others. We were meant to be different. In fact, diversity is the law of creation. There are over ten thousand types of cockroaches alone, and the various shades of all colors cannot be numbered. There is not one kind of anything. And yet throughout the entire diversity of His creation, we find synergy in a perfectly balanced eco system, one where hundreds of millions of diverse creations work together in the unity of His design. Synergy is the result of creations working out their differences together.

Imagine two people with two conflicting opinions. One wants to eat Chinese and the other Mexican. But they only have one car and time is limited. They are both strong-willed and insist on meeting their own individual needs. Therefore, in order for either of them to be fed, they must come up with a creative solution. This is where synergy begins: not with unity or agreement,

but with the problem, the disagreement, diversity, or opposite. Synergy ends with unity.

Synergy is lost when a strong-willed individual insists on his way or assumes control. The following is such an example:

Acts 15:36-41 KJV

36 And some days after Paul said unto Barnabas, Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they do.

37 And Barnabas determined to take with them John, whose surname was Mark.

38 But Paul thought not good to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work.

39 And the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other: and so Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus;

40 And Paul chose Silas, and departed, being recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God.

41 And he went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches.

It is impossible to know all the dynamics of this situation, but it is possible to know the mind of the Lord. It is never a good thing when godly men refuse to resolve their differences because of strong wills. At this point in Paul's life, the true synergy was set aside for his objective. He would go through much pain and turmoil in his life before coming to the true understanding of spiritual synergy. Eventually, as Paul's life drew to a close, he would write this concerning Mark whom he rejected:

2 Timothy 4:11 KJV

Only Luke is with me. Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry.

Over time Paul was forced to reconsider his assessment of Mark. Paul eventually came to appreciate the differences in others and to recognize their “profit.”

Synergy speaks to more than simply working together, jointly, for a common purpose. It is found in Romans 16:3, 9, 21; 1 Corinthians 3:9; 2 Corinthians 1:24; 8:23; Philippians 2:25; 4:3; Colossians 4:11; 1 Thessalonians. 3:2; Philemon 1,24; 2 John 8, where it describes fellow labors, or co-workers. It implies equality, not hierarchy. It is not used to describe subordinates but peers.

Spiritual Synergy

Some “Assembly” Required

1 Corinthians 14:26 KJV

26 How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, everyone of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying.

The words “*come together*” are derived from the word “*synergy*.” Christian gatherings are not supposed to have a speaker/audience structure.

Christians are to come together to synergize as peers. “When you come together, synergize.” Allow the uniqueness of each person and his gift(s) to

manifest in a crescendo of living instruments.

For this to take place, there must be a certain amount of expectation. People should come ready and prepared to participate. Things happen when God's people come together. Paul writes, "*But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal (1 Corinthians 12:7-18).*" Paul explains that each person's gift is given to benefit the others, so unless there was a coming together and a synergizing, some person(s) might not receive their benefit(s). This scripture conveys the idea that God never intended a single person, or even a few "elite," to have control or dominance over any meeting. It is the interaction of all available parts that creates synergy/unity.

In the meetings we attend, there is no stage, no "front" of the room, no pulpit, no person in control. All of us have prepared for the meeting in private study, worship, and prayer. We all sit together as a group with our children present. We worship the Lord together and wait upon Him. It was uncomfortable to wait at first, but God speaks in His time, not ours. The Holy Spirit moves among us as a flowing river, touching each of us with a different aspect/gift of His common theme. We share spiritual insight, testimonies, what God has been doing in our lives, prayer requests, healing needs. We encourage each other and we hold each other accountable. And our child is just as much a part as the adults.

Hebrews 10:24-25 KJV

*24 And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works:
25 Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.*

To assemble is “*to bring together by joining together in an orderly way with logical selection and sequence. To fit together various parts so as to make into an operative whole (i.e., a radio or an airplane). To meet together with purpose.*”

Many Christians believe that as long as they attend a Church on Sunday morning, they have fulfilled their obligation, as this passage demands. But the author of Hebrews obviously had something more in mind than just a gathering of saints when he used the word “*assembly*.” You assemble an orchestra. You assemble an army. You assemble a football team. You *don't* assemble an audience or group of spectators.

To be assembled, the orchestra must be in place and in tune. The woodwinds must be in their place and percussion in their place. When the orchestra is in tune, no instrument can be singled out. However, if just one instrument is out of tune or out of rhythm, it is very apparent exactly which one it is. Consequently, an orchestra *assembles* weekly to practice their music until they can execute it flawlessly.

Consequently, most contemporary churches are not an assembly of believers but more akin to Christian entertainment. The leadership is more concerned with filling the building than building the spiritual quality of those who gather. To this end, the leadership hires professional program managers who compose the service, make sure musicians are in place with the correct music, make sure that talented people lead in worship and that the gathering place is aesthetically pleasing. The goal of the leadership is to require as little as possible from those who gather and to insure that they are properly entertained so that they will come back. So, week after week, the leadership gives and gives while the believers who gather take and take. It is this very

reason why the shelf life of the pastor of the average American church is only two to five years. After that time, the pastor is sucked dry. Many times, he leaves disillusioned, bitter, disappointed, and angry with both the congregation and God.

Ephesians 4:15-16 KJV

15 But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:

16 From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.

The words “*fitly joined together*” are also derived from the word “*synergy*” and are probably the best example of what happens when many parts come together and synergize. They become more than the sum of their parts. This scripture explains that if the body of Christ is to mature, then the various parts of the body must come together and be allowed to synergize. It is not through preaching (speaker/audience) that this happens but through the interaction/relationship of the various parts.

Here we find that the body “*increases*” or grows to maturity through the “*effectual working* [synergy] *of every part*,” not just (what we consider) ministers. How does this manifest itself? Through “*that which every joint supplieth*.” Joints are where bones meet. The relationships between each part cause the body to grow.

Now contrast this to what is found in the prior verses: “*And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the*

edifying of the body of Christ (Eph 4:11-12).” Verse 16 talks about the maturing of the body through the interaction/relationship between each part, and this verse talks about the maturing of the body through the gifts of ministry. Why the contradiction? There is no contradiction. It is the same thing. Ministerial gifts are at work in each member allowing “*every joint*” to supply that which the body needs. Gifts of the Spirit (and ministry) are on loan to us from God. That is why ministerial gifts may change in a persons life as the needs of the body of Christ changes.

But when a church operates as a monarchy (e.g., like a pyramid of digressing power), with a pastor at the top “over” other church offices and the congregation at the bottom, you will not experience true synergy, and this is the reason churches stay at such an immature spiritual level forever (Ephesians 4 teaches us that synergy must be present for the body of Christ to grow). This is not to say that you cannot have pastors but that the pastoral role must not be exercising control. Peter describes the role of pastors as “*ensamples*.” True leaders do NOT take control. This is not the nature of a servant. True leaders allow their lives to serve as examples for others to follow and they will follow. We must remember that pastors are only one aspect of ministry, and nowhere in the scripture does it suggest that they have absolute authority over other ministries. In fact, *1 Corinthians 12:28* places them at the bottom of the list.

There is no question in my mind that getting there will be a challenge for many churches. Some people like the comfort and lack of responsibility that being a spectator affords. Others will think that they are something they are not and try to use something that they do not have. Christian leaders must not squash the effort but “teach,” lead, and example to the congregation the correct way.

“Co” Operation With God

Mark 16:20

And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with [sunergountos] them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen.

Here again we find a derivative of the word synergy. The first generation Christians were successful because they worked with God instead of expecting God to work with them. Many people schedule meetings, hold tent revivals, publish material, take missions trips, and expect that because their purpose is to serve the Lord, God will work with them. This is because they are introduced into Christian leadership with a false notion of what it means to be in ministry. The people whose lives they imitate were just as inconsiderate of God as they are.

Ministry is synonymous with service and servant-hood. It does NOT include ruling, controlling, or directing. Many well-intentioned, howbeit misled individuals teach others that “ministry” means growing a large following of people who support them and look to them for growth. We must follow the example of John the Baptist who continued to point people to Jesus and not himself.

Consider the following:

Romans 8:28 KJV

And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

Once again, we find the word “*synergy*.” This verse tells us that we co-labor with God to produce good things. It is a partnership. If we take off in a certain direction, doing what we believe is “for” the Lord, then we abandon that partnership. When we do that, we are expecting God to follow. That is not how Jesus operated. He watched as events unfolded around Him and then labored where He saw God working. Jesus co-operated (co-labored) with God to produce the greatest of all synergies: spiritual synergy. This should be the pattern for how we operate. Great things... marvelous things can be done when we “co-labor” with God. Contrast this to the elaborate plans that many men make to promote their ministries, to get audiences, to obtain financial support, and to have titles. Where is God in their agenda? It is no wonder that we do not see the manifestation of God in their work.

Community

Jesus told us, “*Again I say to you, that if two of you agree on earth about anything that they may ask, it shall be done for them by My Father who is in heaven. For where two or three have gathered together in My name, I am there in their midst (Matthew 18: 19–20).*” This is the best example of synergy in the scripture. There is a reason why Jesus said “two” instead of referencing large groups. Synergy actually develops better within a small group. This is why Bible studies and home fellowships are so more effective than large group meetings.

As parents, we cannot tolerate division amongst our children. We insist that they speak respectfully with one another, that there be no discord. Even parents who cannot achieve it still desire it. We are all part of the family of God, and what God wants is no different from most parents want. God wants unity among His children.

When we consider contemporary Christianity, we find that (for the most part) Christian leaders ignore the divisions. They say they want unity, but their actions speak louder. They have no genuine desire for unity and take no steps to achieve it. They have selected the easy way out. They have settled for isolation (division). This is their choice, not God's. I realize that almost all Christian leaders can point to others with whom they believe they have unity, but these are usually others of the same denomination or theology, usually in another town or in another part of the city.

When we consider Bible pattern, we find that when God created a "*help*" companion for Adam, she was his opposite but she was also near him. As Christian leaders, we should consider those to whom we are near. They will usually be our opposites but they are nevertheless those near whom God has placed us. Remember, after God created Eve, He brought her to Adam. Who are the Christian leaders near you?

Consider also how God views the Church. Throughout the New Testament epistles as well as Revelation, we find the Church divided into geographical locations (i.e., to the Church at Ephesus, to the Galatians, etc.). It is apparent that God's design is that the churches and leaders of a geographical area be one. No one is more aware of how impossible this may seem than I.

Synergy implies that there exists more than one element. In other words, a single individual working alone on a project can work efficiently but can never develop synergy. One of the best examples of synergy is a team. Teams are more than just groups of individuals, each of whom is doing its own individual work. It is a group of individuals who desire to achieve more than their individual efforts will allow. It is the cooperation of these individuals – their

relationship to one another – that produces synergy. Synergy is not the goal of a team but a means by which teams can become more effective or win. A team is effective only when each individual performs his part, not for his own *individual* benefit but for the benefit of the *team*. And each member must trust the others to perform their parts if they are to collectively win. Therefore, at the center of synergy, there must be trust. Trust has been defined as when people:

- are open, honest, and unafraid of exposing their weaknesses
- share
- make an effort to understand each other's opinions and desires
- collaborate with one another
- freely express their feelings with one another

Trust, or the lack of it, is the reason why the churches within a given geographical area remain isolated. Consider the description of trust above. I have many Christian friends, and our relationships did not always start out as smooth as this description.

Many pastors have written describing how they have been meeting with other area pastors for years and nothing has changed. The same barriers exist now as when they first began. "How can we get past the problems that our various theologies and doctrines create?" You don't. These issues must be set aside as you focus on the building of your relationships and trust, because the foundation for any friendship is trust. You become friends first. You must become brothers. Brothers understand how to work through differences, to synergize. Pastors don't. Jesus brought His disciples together for 3½ years to build a brotherhood among them before they began their ministry. Try to follow the example Jesus set, and only after a brotherhood is established can

you deal with the issue of doctrine.

Conclusion

There is no question that the primary requirement for synergy is trust - and that the lack of synergy in Christendom comes from the lack of trust with Christian leaders. Trust isn't just a requirement for synergy. It is the foundation of Christianity. It is what makes us brethren. Without it we are brethren in name only.

Today there is a critical need for synergy. Not only do churches operate in isolation, but with most churches you will find powerful and controlling individuals who squash synergy from coming about. At the center of all this inconsistency (with the scripture) is a lack of trust. Pastors don't trust one another and neither do they trust their congregations. So they maintain tight control over everything.

I suggest that pastors try setting aside their heavy hand of control for a while and allow their congregation to synergize - to grow up spiritually, "*to be no more children.*" Also, they should try setting aside their doctrines and theologies and try getting to know the other pastors of their community as friends and as brothers and sisters in the Lord. This will foster synergy. Great things can happen!

Amen.

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The Unbelievably Amazing Destiny Of The Church - A Bible Study by Jack Kelley - <http://gracethrufaith.com/end-times-prophecy/unbelievably-amazing-destiny-church/>

But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions-it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 2:6-7).

Even after years and years of answering questions about it, I am still amazed at how little most Christians know about what's ahead for the Church. I realize that many Church leaders have become earth centered, focused on meeting growth and financial goals in the here and now. In fact a recent Barna Group survey revealed that the top five indicators pastors use to judge their success are attendance, giving, number of programs, number of

staff, and the square footage of their facility.

To me that's a shame because the Church is supposed to be a heaven centered organization focused on getting people ready to go there soon. Bringing people into the kingdom and preparing them for eternity should be the Church's number one priority (Matt. 28:19-20). You would think it would at least be in the top 5 indicators of success, but it isn't.

Paul said we should fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, because what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal (2 Cor. 4:18). To me that means we should pay more attention to our next life than we do to this one. After all we're going to spend a whole lot more time there. The problem is, most Christians know so little about our next life that even if they wanted to focus on it they couldn't tell where to begin.

Therefore, I invite you to spend the next few minutes thinking about something that will have eternal significance to you; the unbelievably amazing destiny of the Church.

Where Do We Go Next?

Let's begin at the beginning. When Jesus died for our sins and rose again He freed us from the penalty thereof, giving us the assurance of eternal life with Him. This is not only true of the Church, but of all those who believed in a coming redeemer and died before the Church came to be, and all those who will come to believe in Jesus after the Church has departed. Hebrews 10:12 tells us Jesus offered one sacrifice (Himself) for all time. That covers everyone from the first man to the last.

Those who either lived in the time before the Church or will live in the time after it, were (will be) required to give evidence of their belief that Jesus died for them by obeying God's laws, and can suffer a lapse of faith, even to the point of losing their salvation. I assume you know this to be true about Old Testament believers. Matt. 25:1-13, Rev. 14:12, Rev. 16:15 tell us it's also true about post Church believers.

The only requirement God has imposed on people who live during the time of the Church is that we believe in the one He sent (John 6:28-29). What's more, He has accepted the responsibility for seeing to it that we don't suffer a lapse of faith and has put His Spirit in our hearts as a deposit guaranteeing what is to come (2 Cor. 1:21-22) so we can't lose our salvation. This manifestation of His grace is unique to the Church.

Also unique to us is the authority He gave us to become members of His own family (John 1:12-13). He made good on this by legally adopting us as His children, brothers and sisters of Christ (Romans 8:29) and co-heirs with Him (Romans 8:17, Galatians 4:4-7).

At the same time, He chose to begin seeing us as we will be after we've been perfected, calling us "a new creation" (2 Cor. 5:17), "holy and blameless, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish"(Ephes. 5:25-27), and having the righteousness of God (2 Cor. 5:21). He knows we'll be that way in the future, after He changes us from mortal to immortal, but He began seeing only the "future us" from the time we believed. He attributes our post salvation sins to the sin that still lives within us, and not to the perfect creation He now

considers us to be (Romans 7:18-20).

These are the first indications that God looks upon the Church differently from any other group of humankind. If that was all He has done for us, it would be far more than we deserve. But in truth, it's only the beginning. The real differences will come into effect after He takes us to our eternal home.

Unlike Israel, the Church's destiny is not tied to a specific location on Earth. In fact our destiny is not on Earth at all. Our citizenship is in heaven, Paul said, and we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ (Phil. 3:20).

While at present the Lord's Kingdom is in this world, Jesus said it's not of this world (John 18:36). In other words we don't belong here. The Church has no homeland on Earth. We are sojourners in a foreign land, and our heart's desire should be to go home where we belong. That doesn't mean we can't have a good life while we're here. It means we should know that, even on its very best day, life here can't begin to compare with being home.

Home At Last

Our journey home will be a short one, and it will take many of us by surprise, although we've been warned that it shouldn't (1 Thes. 5:4). One minute we'll be here, going about our business, and in the next we'll be there, having been changed from mortal to immortal and from flawed to perfect in the twinkling of an eye (1 Cor. 15:51-53).

Jesus said He will come back to take us to a place in His Father's house that He's been preparing for us ever since He left (John 14:2-3). This is where we'll be safely hidden away while His Father visits the most extreme series of judgments in the history of mankind upon the rebellious world (Isaiah 26:20-21). This series of judgments is called the wrath of God in the Bible (Rev. 6:17). It will take seven years to complete and the Lord promised to deliver us from all of it (1 Thes. 1:10, Rev. 3:10).

During that time the Church will experience a series of events that couldn't possibly be more different from those taking place on earth. For the first time in our lives we will actually be face to face with the Lord and receive our welcome into the Kingdom, the voices of untold numbers of angels singing and shouting for joy ringing in our ears (Rev. 5:11-14).

We will have a joyful reunion with those whose spirits preceded us, and who will have received their resurrection bodies at the same time as ours were being changed (1 Thes. 4:16-17).

In describing this change John wrote, "Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is" (1 John 3:2) and Paul said, "He will transform our lowly bodies so they will be like His glorious body" (Phil. 3:21). Try to imagine a glorious body just like the Lord's, with abilities comparable to His.

We will attend an awards ceremony called the bema judgment where the Lord will reward

us for the things we did at His direction and in His strength during our time on earth (1 Cor. 3:10-15, John 15:5). Jesus called these rewards "treasure in heaven" and said we should be more focused on storing them up than we are on storing up treasure on Earth (Matt. 6:19-21). That old saying "we can't take it with us" is certainly true, but the Lord said we can send it up ahead.

Our relationship with the Lord will be formalized. The Bride of Christ will become the wife of the Lamb (Rev. 19:6-8, Rev. 21:9). We'll be seated at His right hand, above all the ranks of angels, assuming our role as co-regents with Him (Ephes. 1:18-21, Ephes. 2:4-7).

So This Is Where We Live

We'll be shown our eternal home, the New Jerusalem. From the description in Rev. 21 it appears to be extravagant beyond all known standards, being made of the purest gold and and precious gems. The overall dimensions of the New Jerusalem seem extravagant as well. It will be almost 1400 miles in length and width and just as tall (Rev. 21:16-17). If it was located on Earth it would be much bigger than Israel, as big as western Europe, and nearly half as big as the USA. At nearly 1400 miles tall, it would extend into space well beyond the upper atmosphere and be 4,000 times as tall as the world's next tallest building.

Based on these dimensions, I don't believe the New Jerusalem will be on Earth, but instead will descend out of Heaven into an orbit in close proximity to Earth. Some speculate it will be triangular in shape while others say it will be a cube, but the Bible does not reveal its shape. (If it was a globe it would be 2/3rds the size of the moon.)

Our home won't need either the sun or moon to shine on it because the glory of God will give it light. In fact the light from our home will be sufficient to provide light for Earth as well (Rev. 21:23-24). Remember, in Matt. 24:29 Jesus said the sun and moon would not give their light after the end of the Great Tribulation. So we will be the light of the world after all (Matt. 5:14). There won't be a temple in the New Jerusalem because the Father and Son will be our Temple there (Rev. 21:22) just as we have been their temple here (1 Cor. 3:16).

The Bible doesn't provide any description of our individual quarters but from the general description of the city I think we'll find them to be just as opulent.

Some have asked why we will need such a spectacular home, and truth be told we probably won't. But remember, the kings of the Earth live in palaces that provide luxurious comfort far beyond their needs. Members of their families live in a way the rest of us can only dream about. How much more so should it be for the family of the King of the universe.

But more importantly, giving us only what we need was not the Lord's objective in building the New Jerusalem. Right from the beginning, His objective where the Church is concerned has been to demonstrate to ages yet to come the incomparable riches of His grace, expressed in His kindness to us in Christ Jesus (Ephes 2:7). And wouldn't you expect Jesus, one for whom cost is truly no object, to throw the budget out the window when it comes to building something that will express His love for His bride?

Some wonder how we'll occupy ourselves in our new life. The Bible doesn't offer any detail on this, probably because there is no way we could compare life here with life in the hereafter. Paul, who did get a glimpse of it, said;

"No eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him" (1 Cor. 2:9).

What we do know is that no group before or after us has ever been so blessed while on Earth, and His word tells us that no group before or after us will ever be so blessed in eternity. And the best part is we don't have long to wait to start receiving it all. You can almost hear the footsteps of the Messiah

<https://www.raptureready.com/featured/chambers/jc3.html>

Church Without The Holy Spirit

by Joseph Chambers

The greatest need of this hour is a new Biblical baptism in the Holy Ghost. I am by no means speaking of what is happening in the hyper Charismatic churches. The Holy Ghost does not minister in Christ's body to knock people down, but rather to pick them up. When He touches a human life, He does not make them less intelligent, but more intelligent. He does not reveal Himself to cause people to lose control or become a spastic, emotional basket case. He reveals Himself in the human life to lift up, to give spiritual wisdom and self-control, to mature the person in the graces of Jesus Christ, and to empower the human life with the very character of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Why has the activity of the Holy Ghost become associated with wild emotions, drunkenness, barking like dogs, and an incredible list of other wild and subjective human emotions? The answer is simple. It is a lot easier to pursue emotions than spiritual maturity. Satan tried his best to sidestep Jesus Christ from the lofty path to redemption by suggesting a sideshow at the pinnacle of the temple. The Pentecostal revival of the last one hundred (+ or -) years has extended an incredible influence for the kingdom, but the sideshow mentality has created great hindrance, especially in the many

current circles. Benny Hinn, Paul and Jan Crouch, Kenneth Hagin, and many other worldwide ministries are absolutely nothing but a sideshow, diverting attention from genuine Pentecostal provisions for the church.

We should not think it strange that the master imitator would do everything in his capacity to divert the church world away from the omnipotent powers in the gifts of the Holy Spirit. The Book of Acts is not outdated. In fact, it is the model for His New Testament church. A church that has denied this model has no right to the claims of other New Testament books. The writer of Acts, Apostle Luke, wrote this treatise as a continuation of his Gospel book, which we call "The Gospel According to Luke." Listen to his introduction to the Book of Acts. "The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, Until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen." (Acts 1:1-2).

It is impossible to read this introduction without seeing that the four Gospel books were just the beginning. They record, ""all that Jesus began both to do and teach, until"" He was crucified and resurrected and now the church is His extension to continue what He began. Both the Gospels and the Epistles leave no question to this fact. Jesus said, "Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: Of sin, because they believe not on me; Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged. I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you."

(John 16:7-14).

Whatever part of church history you research, you will never find a New Testament revival without discovering the manifestations of the Gifts of the Holy Ghost. Let me list a little of my own research just to show this point:

I want to quote something from the writings of John Wesley. This is what he says concerning the decrease of signs and gifts. "Because the love of many, almost all Christians so-called, waxed cold. That was the real cause why the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost were no longer to be found in the Christian Church."

In a German work, Souer's History of the Christian Church, vol. 3, p. 406, the following is found: "Dr. Martin Luther a prophet, evangelist, speaker in tongues and interpreter, in one person, endowed with all the gifts of the Holy Spirit."

Regarding Dwight L. Moody, here are a few quotations from page 402, Trails and Trumpets of Faith by Rev. D.D. Boyd, a Baptist minister. This man was a very intimate friend of the famous evangelist.

"When I, a YMCA Member, got to the rooms of the Young Men's Christian Association (Victoria Hall, London), I found the meeting "on fire." The young men were speaking with tongues, prophesying. What on earth did it mean? Only that Moody had been addressing them that afternoon! "What manner of man is this?" thought I, but still I did not give him my hand . . . Many of the clergy were so opposed to the movement that they turned their backs upon our poor innocent Young Men's Christian Association for the part we took in the work; but, afterwards, when the floodgates of divine grace were opened, Sunderland (near London) was taken by storm."

Some years ago, Dr. F. B. Meyer visited Estonia, one of the Baltic provinces of Russia, where he found some simple peasant congregations of Baptists. He wrote to the London Christians about the wonderful work of the Holy Ghost that he had witnessed among them. He stated: "It is very

remarkable at a time when the Lutheran Church of this land has lost its evangelistic fervor, and is inclined to substitute forms and rites for the living power of Christ, that God raised up a devoted nobleman, Baron Uxhall, to preach the gospel in all its simplicity, and is renewing among the peasantry those marvelous manifestations which attended the first preaching of the Gospel when God bore witness to the message of salvation with signs and wonders and gifts of the Holy Ghost. To come across a movement like this is intensely interesting. The gift of tongues is heard quite often in the meetings, especially in the villages, but also in the towns. Here at Reval, the pastor of the Baptist Church tells me that they often break out in his meetings. When they are interpreted they are found to mean, "Jesus is coming soon; Jesus is near. Be ready; be not idle." When they are heard, unbelievers who may be in the audience are greatly awed."

Charles Finney said in his autobiography, "When I received the Holy Ghost Baptism, it was like waves of glory going through and through me. I literally bellowed out the unutterable gushes of my heart. If this continues I will surely die, but I had no fear of death." This man was a great Presbyterian preacher. (*Booklet, "A Sovereign Move of God," by Joseph R. Chambers, D.D., D.S.L., p. 10.*)

John Wesley (Methodist), Charles Finney (Presbyterian), D.L. Moody (Baptist), and others right on back to the great revival group that defied the Catholic system even before the Reformation were all accompanied by outpourings of the Holy Spirit with signs and miracles. In every case, Satan tried to turn the event into a sideshow. Sometimes he succeeded.

Believers: Temples of His Spirit

Nothing that has happened in the negative can destroy the truth revealed in Holy Scripture. Those who speak as though the gifts of the Spirit have ceased have absolutely no Bible to stand on. One verse in I Corinthians 13

gives them a little ammunition, but their argument fails miserably. Apostle Paul stated, "For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away." (I Corinthians 13:9-10).

This is interpreted as suggesting that when the Canon of Scripture was finished "that which is perfect" had come. I do believe the Word of God, as we have it, is complete and infallible, which most of those using this argument, do not believe, but that is not the intent. The Son of God is indeed coming and He is absolutely perfect and that alone is the subject of Paul's words. Both truth and history proves this fact.

Apostle Paul gave the saints great instructions as to the manifestations of the "Gifts of the Spirit" in the church. When the Scripture is meticulously followed, there is an incredible beauty in Spiritual activity. The divine work of God's Spirit changes the mundane of church life into dynamic authority and power. The Scriptures left no room for this to regress into a sideshow. "If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord. But if any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant. Wherefore, brethren, covet to prophesy, and forbid not to speak with tongues. Let all things be done decently and in order." (I Corinthians 14:37-40).

The apostle warned that the divine life of the Holy Spirit never leaves room for individuals to act out of control. In fact, the Spirit as the third member of the Godhead never operates except as a guest in our midst. We are not robots that He moves like figures on a chessboard. I hear people say that the Spirit took control and they moved by some strange forces at work in them. The human spirit may indeed take control of someone's actions and the spirits of evil are looking for such an opportunity, but God's Holy Spirit never, ever acts in such a fashion. "And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets." (I Corinthians 14:32).

Our bodies, set apart by His redemption and sanctification are elected and chosen to be the "temples of His activity." The great and glorious Lord of His church has ordained that He would reveal Himself in us. While the very breath of life is His activity, He uses His saints to be His ambassadors. When the eunuch was passing through the desert on his way back to Ethiopia, the Lord of His Church moved Phillip from a citywide revival to baptize one repentant sinner. Then, the Spirit caught him away and set him down at Azotus. Surely, the Spirit could have saved the eunuch but that is not God's model. He used a temple voice to speak and temple hands to baptize.

The New Testament is filled with Holy Ghost baptized saints turning the world "upside down." He has committed unto us the "ministry of reconciliation." Our bodies are to be the skin-tents of the New Testament tabernacle. Rather than one tabernacle in the middle of the camp, we are many tabernacles speaking all over His world. Every one of those tabernacles is to be as glorious and even more so than the one in the Camp of Israel in the wilderness. Read carefully what His Spirit says, "And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." (II Corinthians 5:18-20).

Our Father is resting the entire kingdom of His Son Jesus Christ on us. We can do nothing without Him. He will not do anything in His Kingdom without us. That is His model. He has ordained His saints to be His temple. If the Old Testament ministry was glorious and it was, the New Testament ministry is far greater. Listen to how Apostle Paul described the difference. "Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life. If the

ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not stedfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which glory was to be done away: How shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious? For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory. For even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth. For if that which is done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious. Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech." (II Corinthians 3:6-12).

Please note that this is a spiritual ministry, not of the flesh, but of the Spirit. "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God." (II Corinthians 3:5). Only when men are filled with His Holy Ghost are they going to see the supernatural of God at work.

Temple Hands & Voices

The New Testament is breathtaking. Nobody could dare doubt that a Book of Acts experience is powerful and beautiful. Look at Acts chapter 3 when two disciples just out of the Upper Room arrived at the Jewish temple for prayer. A lame man meets them at the temple entrance. He had never been on the inside because it was forbidden. God had to send His new temple (Holy Ghost filled saints) to meet him on the outside. Here's the story, "And a certain man lame from his mother's womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms of them that entered into the temple; Who seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple asked an alms. And Peter, fastening his eyes upon him with John, said, Look on us. And he gave heed unto them, expecting to receive something of them. Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such

as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk. And he took him by the right hand, and lifted him up: and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength. And he leaping up stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God." (Acts 3:2-8).

This is the model for the New Testament. Not some cathedral where pious saints meet in a starchy high church or a sideshow, where the highly emotional do religious calisthenics. I have watched these sideshows, where the emotional get blasted and the sick watch from the sidelines. Most of the sheep involved in either of these settings are not to blame. It is us: pastors, evangelists, radio ministers, writers, and religious leaders. Our voices, our hands, indeed our entire bodies are to be His tabernacle or temple when the Spirit of God is mightily at work.

Notice the Spirit-filled hands of Peter in Acts chapter three, "And he took him by the right hand, and lifted him up: and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength." (Acts 3:7). This model continues all through the Book of Acts. "And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people; (and they were all with one accord in Solomon's porch. And of the rest durst no man join himself to them: but the people magnified them. And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women.) Insomuch that they brought forth the sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and couches, that at the least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them. There came also a multitude out of the cities round about unto Jerusalem, bringing sick folks, and them which were vexed with unclean spirits: and they were healed every one." (Acts 5:12-16).

There was no showmanship involved. These men were common men that desired no glory, but what was operating in their lives. Not just their hands were temple hands, but their voices were temple voices. "And the word of

God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith. And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people." (Acts 6:7-8).

The miracles were Christ-centered and Christ glorifying. The people were not chasing their religious idol, but were hungry to know the resurrected Christ.

The Holy Ghost Given By Laying On Of Hands

This Baptism of the Holy Ghost was for every believer, but was not automatic with repentance and salvation. The house of Cornelius received salvation and this baptism during the first sermon they ever heard. The anointed voice of Apostle Peter was sounding in this home when the entire congregation, as one person, was saved and filled. "While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost. For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter, Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?" (Acts 10:44-47). Their godly preparation has readied them for the fullness of Christ.

Yet, earlier at the city of Samaria, the city had turned to God and repented with great joy, but no one received the Baptism of the Holy Ghost. Why the difference? Because the Lord meets all men and women where they are and according to his or her needs. After Samaria had received the words of Phillip and were gloriously converted, the apostles came down from Jerusalem. "Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John: Who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive

the Holy Ghost: (For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.) Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost. And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money, Saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost." (Acts 8:14-19).

The church world is desperate for a fresh baptism of the Spirit. Our nation and the world are in an apostate condition. It is not too late. In fact, the greatest outpouring of the Holy Ghost ever is about to happen. The latter rain of the Holy Ghost is yet future and will not occur until Israel is converted at the conclusion of the Seven Years of Tribulation. The early reign of the Holy Ghost began at Pentecost and will conclude at the Rapture. Both the Prophet Joel and Apostle Luke confirmed this timing. (Read our booklet on "The Latter Rain.") To deny the Holy Ghost Baptism available presently is to deny the Latter Rain soon to start in Jerusalem and to spread all over the Millennium Kingdom of Jesus Christ.

Conclusion

The church world is in a mess and the only answer is a sovereign move of the Holy Ghost. When the Biblical order of the Spirit's work is understood, the church has nothing to fear. Fanaticism does not have to be tolerated. Indeed, it must not be. Always remember that there will always be an imitation. When Moses presented his supernatural rod, the witchdoctor had a substitute. The genuine manifestation in Moses' rod, which turned into a serpent, immediately consumed the false manifestation of the magicians. The reason churches are afraid of the false is because they have forsaken the real. Wait on God in total surrender and He will guide you into all truth.

Joseph R. Chambers D. D. Über Kenneth Hagin And The Spirit of the

Serpent

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