

Kingdom Ways: Spiritual Authority 3

Review:

Over the last few weeks we have looked at the ways of the Kingdom as related to Spiritual Authority. We understand that all authority has been given to Jesus Christ and he in turn has delegated spiritual authority to his followers, you and me. Whether you are a leader or a follower, we are to live in and walk out our spiritual authority as believers. Here are a few key points relating to spiritual authority:

- Our spiritual authority is over the devil and his demons and over sickness and disease.
- Our spiritual authority is seen through serving the Body of Christ with one's spiritual giftings.
- Our spiritual authority can become corrupted and damaging, whether as a leader or follower.
- The only one has been given authority over people is Jesus.

Introduction:

The spiritual authority that is delegated to the church is a wonderful thing, full of the gifts of the Spirit as He determines. We see over and over in the Scriptures the amazing encounters of heaven touching earth. Some events are Sovereign in spiritual authority where God alone is acting in power and at other times there is a partnership with his people; like Moses and the Red Sea or the Apostle Paul casting out demons and healing the sick. As we read these passages of Scripture we all long to see greater manifestations of the Kingdom of God affecting the earth on which we live.

However, there are times when those with delegated spiritual authority can become confused and misguided affecting the lives of others, whether leaders or followers. This morning we are looking at the misuse of spiritual authority whether by a leader or follower and how to regain our spiritual equilibrium.

Three Kings:

There is a great book entitled "A Tale of Three Kings" by Gene Edwards. This is a great read in the form of a novel based on King Saul, King David and Absalom David's third son. Many call this book a study in brokenness which I believe is true, but I also see this book describing how to handle spiritual authority appropriately. In each of these kings lives there were victories and downfalls with regards to spiritual authority that we will briefly look at.

1. King Saul:

In **1 Sam 9**, we see the beginning of the story of King Saul being anointed King by the prophet Samuel. Earlier on Samuel warns the people about rejecting God by choosing a king; the people rejected Samuel as God's voice although God tells Samuel it is not him who was rejected but God himself as King of Israel. For those with spiritual authority, whether as a leader or follower, rejection is a common experience. Just ask God.

The story carries on with Saul's questioning of Samuel's choice of king. We see in 1 Sam 10 Samuel anoints Saul as King. We see God changing Saul's heart in **1 Sam 10:9** followed by the Spirit of God coming on Saul in power and him joining with the prophets. The initial rush of spiritual authority can be intoxicating; both good and bad. The Spirit of God continues with Saul (**1 Sam 11:6**) as he brings victory over the Ammonites.

However, in **1 Sam 13** we see King Saul overstepping his spiritual authority. King Saul and Jonathan his son attack a Philistine camp but soon found themselves being overrun. Saul waited seven days for Samuel to return; these seven days were set by Samuel himself. When Samuel did not return Saul took the situation into his own hands because his army was now scattering. King Saul decides to sacrifice the burnt offering which was not his place of spiritual authority. When Samuel returns he rebukes King Saul and tells him he acted foolishly and that now the kingdom would be removed from him and given to a man after God's heart. The rest of the story of King Saul describes his disobedient and tormented downfall.

2. King David:

Next we carry on with the life of David the shepherd boy-king. **1 Sam 16** describes two significant events. Firstly, David is anointed with the Spirit of God resting upon him in power. Secondly, the Spirit of the Lord leaves Saul and now he is tormented by an evil spirit. David's rise to power is catapulted by his victory over Goliath in **1 Sam 17** only to be suppressed by Saul's jealousy; now King Saul is angry and tormented. **1 Sam 18:10-11 - And it happened on the next day that the [evil spirit – NIV] distressing spirit from God came upon Saul, and he prophesied inside the house. So David played music with his hand, as at other times; but there was a spear in Saul's hand. 11 And Saul cast the spear, for he said, "I will pin David to the wall!" But David escaped his presence twice.**

David now lives under the constant threat of his spiritual authority – King Saul. David flees again and again for his life, even into the wilderness. At several points David had the opportunity to kill King Saul but he spares his life. Why? David recognizes the spiritual authority in King Saul as from God.

After the death of King Saul and Jonathan David becomes king and establishes his kingdom. In the midst of King David's rule he brings great victory to Israel. However, King David also abuses his spiritual authority as seen in **2 Sam 11:1 – In the spring, at the time when kings go off to war, David sent Joab out with the king's men...** This is followed by King David's adultery with Bathsheba and the murder of her husband Uriah. Success can make you soft thereby taking advantage of others for your own good.

The story carries on with Nathan the prophet rebuking King David and ultimately the death of David and Bathsheba's child. Eventually Solomon is given to David and Bathsheba however; the damage to the kingdom was already done. Soon we see King David losing his kingdom to his son Absalom.

3. King Absalom:

Now we will see how the life of Absalom compares to that of King Saul and King David with regards to Spiritual Authority. Absalom, the third son of David, and sister to Tamar avenges Tamar's rape by killing Amnon, David's first born but from another mother. Such is the life within David's Kingdom.

After 3 years of exile, and a further 2 years of banishment from the court, David receives his son back into favour, only to be repaid by the usurping of spiritual authority (2 Sa. 15:1–6). Here we see Absalom entertaining the complaints that should have gone before King David. Absalom would interact and discuss the situations of the people all the while stealing their hearts away from the rightful spiritual authority. In the end he tricks his father into letting him go and fulfill a vow to the Lord. This ruse was only to see himself proclaimed as King. King David's response is to flee the coming disaster thereby allowing Absalom to become King.

In the context of spiritual authority, anyone who leads a rebellion has already proven that he has a critical nature, an unprincipled character, and hidden motives in his heart. Frankly, he is a thief.

Absalom did just that; he created dissatisfaction and tension within the realm, and then seized authority to get his followers to establish his own dominion. In the end Absalom finds himself hanging from a tree in the midst of battle only to be killed by one of David's men.

Lessons Learned:

Spiritual authority is a precious gift from God to us. We must handle it with care. All of us walk in levels of spiritual authority and giftedness. As we serve well and grow in character we gain favour and spiritual authority from God. When we stop serving or become ungodly in character we lose favour and spiritual authority from God, never-the-less we are still his children.

- Rejection is something we have all experienced in relationship to spiritual authority, whether you are a leader or follower. Leaders can overlook or disappoint followers causing pain and rejection as in the case of Saul and David. In the same way followers can reject the right spiritual authority and cause disunity and rebellion as we saw with Absalom towards King David.
- Don't treat spiritual authority foolishly. Even though King Saul's actions were evil and wrong towards David, David allowed God – who is the ultimate spiritual authority – to deal with Saul.
- Spiritual Authority and Success – beware... Don't get me wrong, God wants his church to succeed. However, how we handle success is crucial. We must continue to serve well and do so with godly character. If we spend success on ourselves and not furthering the Kingdom we are misguided in the use of our spiritual authority.
- Don't complain or entertain a complainer. Both could find you on the side of a rebellion just like Absalom and his followers. There is no such thing as perfect delegated spiritual authority. So be careful what you say and what you listen to.

Now the real homework begins. I am sure to some degree we can see ourselves falling short in the area of spiritual authority. We have suffered pain and rejection, or have knowingly or unknowingly caused pain and rejection. Maybe we have enjoyed a season of success and think we have arrived at the top – spiritually speaking; therefore we can stop serving and be served. Or just maybe we have experienced disunity and rebellion first hand. How do we reverse and bring healing to ourselves and others that suffer from the misuse of spiritual authority.

Let the Healing begin:

In my own personal journey as a follower and as a leader, I have experienced the best and worst of times. I have found great joy and spiritual freedom on the mountain tops only to find myself in the dark valley of my soul. Here are some personal encounters and principles to help us heal.

- Grace, grace and more grace. Often times when spiritual authority is misused strong rules and or legalistic tendencies can confront you. I have learned to walk in grace, being comfortable with who I am and what I do. Rule-based interaction requires that we perform for love. Grace accepts us just the way we are.

- People first, procedure second. Relationships must be maintained in a healthy and proactive way. We all need order but order was never meant to replace true friendship. Whenever procedure displaces the ability to relate appropriately we need to hang onto relationships.
- Be quick to listen, slow to speak and slower to anger. When I have been hurt or rejected by spiritual authority I get mad. Therefore I need to be careful with my tongue.
- When I get mad or angry I tend to get emotionally damaged. I have had to learn to bring my honest feelings to God in order to be free. Sometimes my emotions are frozen or stuck in a rut. That is where I have needed the help of other spiritual leaders or pastors to break me free.
- Forgive, forgive and forgive – 70 times 7... I have learned to forgive others while allowing trust to be rebuilt. If trust cannot be rebuilt I still choose to forgive.

In Conclusion:

Authority is one of the most awesome aspects of the Kingdom of God. The wonder of Jesus Christ will one day be manifest in his Second Coming when every knee will bow and tongue confess that Jesus Christ is both Lord and Saviour. In a great display of trust Jesus has given some of his authority to the church. This is a great privilege but comes with great responsibility. How we handle this authority whether leader or follower is crucial to adequately representing God's Kingdom.

Therefore we must be committed walking wisely and righteously with God's delegated authority. As well, we must be committed to walking through the process of healing as related to the misuse of spiritual authority. As we come to the end of this service we will take communion lets allow this time to be one of reflection and healing...