

Kingdom Ways: Spiritual Authority 1

Introduction:

This morning I would like to speak to the concept of spiritual authority in the context of the Kingdom of God. It is vital that we understand the importance of spiritual authority because it is so foundational in building up our faith. The Gospels tell us in several places that the people, including the religious leaders marveled at the spiritual authority of Jesus Christ:

Matt 7:28-29 -And so it was, when Jesus had ended these sayings, that the people were astonished at His teaching, 29 for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes. Mark 1:22, Luke 4:32 and John 7:46 all speak of the people's wonder at the authority of Jesus Christ. The Scriptures go onto to tell us that his authority made the way for mighty works of God; **Matt 13:54 - When He had come to His own country, He taught them in their synagogue, so that they were astonished and said, "Where did this Man get this wisdom and these mighty works?** This kind of spiritual authority is attractive and exciting, something people are willing to follow.

However, it has been my experience that when pastors or leaders in the church begin to speak about spiritual authority there are varied responses and reactions. The difference between a response and a reaction is important to distinguish; to respond involves an appropriate question and or answer to a given situation. It is actually used in the context of a liturgical service where the congregation briefly responds to the direction of the leader. In one sense to respond is to react favourably. On the other hand to react speaks of a more expressive or sometimes explosive interaction as in a chemical reaction. Reaction by definition carries with it a sense of opposition. In the context of speaking to spiritual authority there are often those who respond graciously and those who react gruffly.

Most of us respond favourably to the person of Jesus Christ exercising his spiritual authority, after all he is the King of kings. We love to see people set free from sin and death, demons and sickness.

However, there are times when spiritual authority has been abused, especially the delegated authority that is present within the church today. Why risk getting burned again is many people's reaction to spiritual authority within the church.

This morning I want to address the first aspect of spiritual authority in relation to Jesus Christ and his church. Then the following week speak to spiritual authority as related to leaders and followers in the body of Christ.

The Authority of Christ:

There are several Scriptures that wonderfully explain the authority of Jesus. These passages paint clear and vivid pictures of the Kingdom of God especially as related to Jesus. We are told at the end of Ephesians 1 that all things have been placed under the feet of Jesus Christ. The

Father gave this authority to Jesus Christ who now rules as head of the church and through the church.

Phil 2:5-11 – Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, ⁷ but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, *and* coming in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to *the point of death*, even the death of the cross. ⁹ Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, ¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, ¹¹ and *that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

I want to make one comment on the above Scripture. The greater the authority the greater the submission. Jesus demonstrated awesome submission to his Father... therefore God highly exalted Jesus in authority.

Col 2:13- 15 - And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, ¹⁴ having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. ¹⁵ Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.

Remember the story of Jesus having a paralytic brought to him lying on a bed. It tells us that Jesus saw their faith and told the man his sins are forgiven. But the religious leaders reacted saying Jesus had blasphemed; they did not respond favourably. Jesus really pushes their religious buttons by not only saying he has the authority to forgive sins, then he heals the man and sends him on his way. Then the people glorify God and the fact that such power had been given to Jesus.

This is the reality of the two previous passages of Scripture, especially Col 2:13-15. Jesus has forgiven us all our sins and trespasses – he has the authority to do this. As well, **Colossians 2:15 says, "And having disarmed principalities and powers, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it."** In other words, Jesus not only has the authority over sin but also satan and his demonic horde.

The Greek language paints a more vivid picture here; Jesus has plundered satan and his demons and stripped them of any authority or power they had. This stripping was total and complete and revealed in the triumphing over an enemy as the Romans did in their conquests. The victorious Roman Army would parade through the streets, stripping the conquered king naked, they would cut off his thumbs and big toes so that he could never hold a sword again or ever run away; total defeat. This is the authority that Jesus exercised over the devil and his demons.

There are two words that need to be understood in the Scriptures relating to the Kingdom of God. The Greek word for authority is *exousia*, while the Greek word for power is *dunamis*. There are several meanings for *exousia*; freedom of choice, physical and mental power, power of rights, and the power of rule or government. A person with great authority has maximum freedom of choice with the strength to accomplish governmental rule. Jesus has this kind of total authority as the King of the Kingdom.

Dunamis power and ability comes out of one walking in exousia authority. Jesus wonderfully demonstrated his dunamis power when he healed the sick, cast out demons and raised the dead. Jesus' exousia authority reaches into the depths of the heaven releasing Jesus' dunamis power on the earth.

The road to spiritual authority:

We have determined that Jesus has the full rights as King to exercise his authority and power in the realm of his Kingdom. One of the most amazing realities of the Kingdom of God is this – he has given his church delegated spiritual authority. Look with me at **Matt 10:1, Mark 6:7 and Luke 9:1** – all these passages speak of Jesus giving power to the disciples; however the word in the Greek is exousia. Only Luke makes reference to power and authority. Once this authority is given by Jesus the manifestation was power over all demons and to heal the sick.

Jesus' authority and our authority as believers does not beg or ask or question itself. Authority is given and received by faith just as our sins are forgiven by faith or the sick are healed by faith. In that light true spiritual authority commands; not arrogantly or boasting in one's authority, but calmly and submissively to the King of the Kingdom.

So the question arises – how do we grow in spiritual authority? How do we walk in spiritual authority while demonstrating God's power?

Firstly, let's understand that authority has been given to the church of Jesus Christ, to them who believe. The spiritual authority is established upon the person of Jesus Christ; "even the demons are subject to us through your name" (**Luke 10:17**). This delegated spiritual authority is given by God to the 12 apostles (Luke 9:1), then to the 70 disciples (**Luke 10:17**) and ultimately to the entire church (**Mark 16:15-18**) and is received by faith, as are the gifts of the Spirit. There are some who believe that the gifts and dunamis power workings of the Holy Spirit ended when the apostles died and we received the canonization of Scripture. I believe that with the completion of the Holy Scriptures the spiritual authority in the church is to increase and grow even more because now we have the Scriptures which support the power of God...

Secondly, God establishes spiritual authority within the context of revelatory servant-hood; in other words people who understand if you want to be great in God's Kingdom you must learn to be the servant of all. This kind of spiritual revelation does not come in full bloom until it is discovered, developed and deployed, to borrow James Ryle's words. As we submit to God and serve each other we grow in authority with God and favour with man. Remember Jesus who exemplified for us great submission. Jesus himself did not come to be served but to serve...

We grow in spiritual authority as we come under spiritual authority. We grow in spiritual authority as we serve those in the body of Christ. Therefore one of the first steps toward spiritual authority is serving.

- Revelation of being a servant leader.
- Willingness to serve.
- Consistency in service.

Thirdly, spiritual authority grows in one's life as one grows in obedience and godly character. The depth of our inner character growth and outward obedience determines the potency of our spiritual authority. Jesus learned obedience through the things he suffered from in his ministry. The same is true for us, we suffer in various ways as Christians, and we press on growing in obedience. As a result God can trust us with more authority. So we are challenged to grow in:

- Love
- Integrity
- Generosity

When service and character growth are complementing each other we are lead to favour:

- Favour with God who releases giftings
- Favour with man as related to timing

The true path to authority is experienced when serving, godly character and favour are in harmony with each other. When we put our faith into action by listening and obeying God's leading, we grow in authority.

In Conclusion:

We understand that God's Kingdom ways involves the release of his spiritual authority on earth as it is in heaven. Jesus is the Captain of the Hosts and the King in charge of the Kingdom and the church. His authority and power are unparalleled in the heavens above or on earth below. He is the conquering King who has fully defeated his enemies, sin, death and the devil.

God's Kingdom does not stop in relation to his Son Jesus Christ, but in turn spiritual authority has been delegated to the church of Jesus. This delegation of authority is gifted to us and received by faith but also requires growth to become fully mature and effective. So the church is on a journey of becoming more like Jesus so that we can with spiritual authority demonstrated the Kingdom of God on earth as it is in heaven. Kingdom authority is demonstrated in the church by living godly and loving lives as well as the super natural manifestations of power.

In Application:

Bob Dylan wrote a song called Gotta serve Somebody in 1979. Here is the chorus, the rest of the song fully challenges one's character.

You're gonna have to serve somebody, yes indeed
You're gonna have to serve somebody
Well, it may be the devil or it may be the Lord
But you're gonna have to serve somebody