



LEARNING FREEDOM WITHIN THE YOKE

INTRODUCTION	1
PART I THE BASICS: SONSHIP AND SUBMISSION	2
PART II THE DNA OF KINGDOM AUTHORITY	9
• What does it look like and how does it work?	
PART III NEW CREATION LEADERSHIP	15
PART IV APOSTOLIC DIMENSIONS OF AUTHORITY	21
PART V CONCLUDING THOUGHTS AND SUMMARY	26

INTRODUCTION

The abuse of authority has proven hurtful to many precious people. This causes fear and suspicion to arise whenever the topic is mentioned. By merely reading the word “authority” some will no doubt experience a twinge of pain because of past negative associations with abusive authority in the church.

In his book, *“Don’t Drink the Grape Punch,”* Daryl Wood exposes cult-type authority that dominates and manipulates people. There are those who use God’s people to promote their own agendas and success, rather than asking God to use them to encourage and nurture the success of people.

An equally serious problem is found at the other end of the pendulum swing: people who walk in a spirit of independence. While much of the world has respect for authority and honor built into their culture, “doing your own thing” is popular in the Western world. The independent spirit of this age is not compatible with the full realization of Christ’s kingdom on earth.

The dictionary defines authority as: “The power to enforce laws, exact obedience, command, determine, or judge.” While this meaning may suffice in a secular and unredeemed society, its application within the church brings havoc and damage. At the heart of biblical, spiritual authority is the concept of servanthood. Jesus’ teaching (Mark 10: 42-45) makes clear the concept of service, “. . . *not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant.*” It is in this sense that the word “authority” is used in this discussion.

Our initial perception of God normally comes from authority figures. Dysfunctional parenting has wounded many people; dysfunctional shepherding has wounded others. It takes functional parenting and/or functional shepherding to bring needed healing. God will use whatever wounded us to bring healing and wholeness to us. We are the benefactors of the spirit of Elijah, sent by God to *turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of children to their fathers* (Malachi 4:6).

The kingdom of God is the joyous realm of life, love, liberty and peace. It’s also the sphere of ultimate and life-enabling authority. Humanly speaking, the twin realities of “life-enabling”

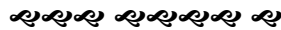
and “authority” would seem to be contradictory because our earthy and humanistic understanding of authority falls far short of the true purpose and function of God’s ways.

God-breathed authority is liberating and life-giving, nothing like the Gentile authority that has damaged so many people in search of our Father in heaven. The CEO-type, top-down approach to church leadership does not generate the life-giving results that bear the marks of Jesus. But, neither do independence nor rugged individualism. Neither Gentile hierarchy nor Western individualism reveals the mystery of Christ in you, the hope of glory (Colossians 1:27). The mystery is revealed as we are yoked with Jesus, and thereby with one another, as the Colossians verse implies—the “you” is plural . . . His glory resides in all of us . . . together.

Eugene Peterson provides a contemporary rendering of Jesus’ words that wonderfully captures the grace empowering, life enabling, essence of submitting to the disciplines of being “yoked” with Him:

“Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to Me. Get away with Me and you’ll recover your life. I’ll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with Me and work with Me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won’t lay anything heavy or ill fitting on you. Keep company with Me and you’ll learn to live freely and lightly.” (Matthew 11:28-30 The Message)

Our hope in discussing this subject is that reactionary extremes could be avoided, that a pathway to healing might be opened, and that a proper understanding of the grace-filled and liberating power of true God-breathed authority will be discovered.



Jesus declared:

“All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth” – Matthew 28:18 NKJ

“By tracing authority to its highest source, you will eventually see God.”
– Watchman Nee

In this essay, we will be considering Jesus’ authority as expressed on earth. It is our desire to see “God on earth” –the incarnation of the life of Christ manifested on earth to the fullest in His Body, the Church, the Bride of Christ. This includes the expression of His kingdom authority and life, first in us, then through us.

According to Jesus’ statement, all legitimate authority has its root (is sourced) in Him. His authority manifests in three specific realms: **civil** authority, **familial** authority, and **ecclesial** authority. We will touch briefly on civil and familial authority, but the primary purpose of this writing is the consideration of ecclesial authority.

These are days of transition for believers and reformation for the church. May we take a fresh look at spiritual authority as Jesus presents it to us?

PART I THE BASICS: SONSHIP AND SUBMISSION

1. SONS, NOT SLAVES

The *bath water* is flowing in a torrent; and the *baby* is in jeopardy!

The living waters of rhema words are washing the church, and revelation knowledge is catapulting saints from *slavery* to *sonship*. Much of what we have known as authority in the church is coming under scrutiny, and rightly so. However, we must be careful of the extremes on both sides of the issue. The old adage certainly applies here: *don't throw out the baby with the bath water!*

Our Father desires that we realize our sonship. We are not slaves. We may be servants in our work, and must be servants in our hearts, but we are to grow in the wonderful knowledge of our adoption as sons in the ecclesial realm, the kingdom of God. He has set us free that we might be joint heirs with Christ as God's sons. It is His intention that we grow through obedience to become Jesus' friends. It is critical that we are all established in the realities of our sonship, before we attempt to embrace the disciplines of the yoke.

Jesus' proclamation, "*I call you friends,*" came after three years of discipleship, learning of Him and His ways. Though it would take Pentecost to "seal" the lessons so to speak, the point is, the status of "friends with God" does not come instantaneously to babies. We start as friends at the new birth in the sense that the war—the enmity between God and ourselves—is over. We're part of His family. There is affectionate assurance in this great truth. However, the co-laboring, joint-partnership of friendship develops in discipleship.

Many maturing disciples are actually experiencing life as sons of our Father. They are no longer bound by sin nor subject to the systems of the world (including religious systems). They are "free indeed" to know and carry out God's purpose and their destiny with authority. They can *see what the Father is doing*, and do likewise. This is what sons do!

Jesus did what He saw the Father doing. That's what sons do!

Please read John 15:14-16, then this quote from "*The Language of Kings*" by John Garfield, contrasting the roles of servants and friends (sons):

"Servants expect to receive commands and try to obey them. There is no place for personal desires. Friends are invited into the 'master's business' in a way that deploys the natural desires of their hearts. Instead of telling friends what to do, God is 'inviting' them to ask for the 'whatever' of their heart. Our prayer changes from talking to listening. To our amazement we hear the Father asking us the same question He asked Solomon, 'What's your dream, how can I help you?'"

2. SUBMISSION TO THE HOLY SPIRIT

It all starts here. Our first and foremost submission is to the Holy Spirit.

For as many as are led by the Holy Spirit of God, these are sons of God.

—Romans 8:14

Submission to His guidance radically affects our lives for good, empowering us to live lives in subjection to governing authorities in all arenas of life, civil, familial, and ecclesial. The basis for spiritual authority is to be found in the Holy Spirit's guidance.

All of creation earnestly expects the revealing of the sons of God, who will bring the long-awaited deliverance from corruption (Romans 8:19-21) both to the church and to the earth. The glory of the Father, seen in the sons who bear His image (Romans 8:18, 29-30), will fulfill the law of the Spirit (Romans 8:2) and bring life and peace.

Consider the following words of Scripture as they give us promises of what is to come:

The Anointed One, living in many sons, will fulfill the mystery hoped for—bearing the fruit of love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control (Galatians 5:22-23).

There will be no end to the increase of His government and peace (Isaiah 9:7), *as we seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness* (Matthew 6:33).

The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this. – Isaiah 9:7

Not by might, not by power, but by My Spirit. – Zechariah 4:6

He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you. – Romans 8:11

The reformation process of the church will eventually produce God's image and likeness in His *perfect man* of many members (Ephesians 4:13). The body of Christ will do the will of the Father, His way, in the earth (as it is in heaven). The desires of hearts (Psalm 37:4) will be calibrated to Father's heart. And, He will ask the Solomon questions, "What is your dream? How can I help you?"

God has placed a passion within each person.

3. SUBMISSION TO GOVERNING CIVIL AUTHORITIES

Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation. Therefore submit yourselves.

– 1 Peter 2:11-13a

We cannot say that we are in submission to God and to His kingdom if we are living in disobedience to the tangible and God-established authorities in our lives. It will be good to consider Paul's teaching in Romans 13 by beginning the context at Chapter 12, verse 9. There are thirty-one specifics regarding conduct in the passage. These should be connected to Romans 13:1-2:

(1) Let love be without hypocrisy. (2) Abhor what is evil. (3) Cling to what is good. (4) Be kindly affectionate to one another (5) with brotherly love, (6) in honor giving preference to one another; (7) not lagging in diligence, (8) fervent in spirit, (9) serving the Lord, (10) rejoicing in hope, (11) patient in tribulation, (12) continuing steadfastly in prayer; (13) distributing to the needs of the saints, (14) given to hospitality. (15) Bless those who persecute you; (16) bless and do not curse. (17) Rejoice with those who rejoice, and (18) weep with those who weep. (19) Be of the same mind toward one another. (20) Do not set your mind on high things, but (21) associate with the humble. (22) Do not be wise in your own opinion. (23) Repay no one evil for evil. (24) Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. If it is possible, (25) as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. (26) Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather (27) give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. (28) Therefore, "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; (29) if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head." (30) Do not be overcome by evil, (31) but overcome evil with good.

Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves. – Romans 13:1-2

Liberation from the law of sin and death is not a license for lawlessness in any realm, but an introduction to a new kind of life, a "God-kind-of-life," which is filled with mercy and grace, longsuffering, goodness and truth. Paul said (Titus 2:11) that the grace that has appeared to humanity is a teaching grace. It teaches us to abstain from ungodliness, not indulge in lawlessness.

Those who have been liberated by the power of the Cross and resurrection life learn to walk in a new and higher level of submission to the authority of God, bound not by cold and robotic compliance, but rather constrained by the law of life, love, and liberty in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:2; James 1:25).

Five times in his writings, the Apostle Paul referred to himself as a "bondservant," yet the nature of those bonds was love not grudging duty. The empowering Spirit of Christ in us, and our subjection to Him, inevitably produces the right kind of fruit in every sphere of life.

Because of the love nature and basis of our submission, Christians are a nation's best citizens. And that means more than waving flags. Spirit-led sons of God are the salt of the earth and the light of the world in practical ways, making a difference where we live.

Our submission to Christ will manifest a chaste conduct accompanied by fear, with gentle and quiet spirits that are precious in the sight of God (1 Peter 3:2, 4). Sons will overcome evil with good as we go extra miles, even giving our shirts, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit of God.

The bylaws of the kingdom as expressed in Jesus' Sermon on the Mount will be lived out by grace, because heaven's power and authority indwells us as the person of Christ.

While it may be understandable to carnal minds, it is wrong to compromise our witness by being reactionary, adopting the world's ways, and manifesting the strong-arm of the flesh. This simple (but profound) obedience of faith will take us all the way up to the point of violating the will and nature of God. Only at that point will disobedience to civil authority be in order. (We will touch on this again later in this essay). Even then, we must maintain the proper attitude of humility and submission that is expected and empowered by the Holy Spirit (Acts 4:5-20; 1 Peter 2:11-23).

4. SUBMISSION TO ELDERS

Submit yourselves to your elders. - 1 Peter 5:5

Many believers have attempted to live a dualistic life with regard to authority. While they readily will submit to governing civil authorities (Romans 13:1), they live without restraint or submission to authority in their spiritual lives. We cannot pick and choose the spheres of life in which we are willing to submit. Jesus spoke of rendering to *Caesar what is Caesar's and to God the things that are God's*" (Matthew 22:21).

Our submission to the elders of the church is vital for our spiritual development as kingdom men and women. The nature of our submission, what it looks like and how it works out, can be as varied as the trees in the forest. But the fact of our submission to elders is a non-negotiable biblical truth.

God places us under guardians and stewards (Galatians 4:1-2) who, in turn, give account to Him for our souls (Hebrews 13:17). They are commissioned to willingly oversee us (1 Peter 5:2) in ways that equip us for the work of the ministry, so that we may walk in a manner worthy of our calling (Ephesians 4:1).

God prepared good works for us to walk in (Ephesians 2:10). But, the works were prepared for maturing believers. Baby Christians must begin with simple and general lessons as they begin to learn how to walk in obedience. (If we cannot obey man whom we can see, how will we obey God whom we cannot see?) We are first to become disciples, submitted to teachers (see Matthew 10:24-25), so that we might learn to walk in His higher ways of *thinking* and *doing* (Isaiah 55:8-9). Elders are examples to the younger followers (1 Peter 5:3).

Our old and carnal ways, the ways of the flesh, cannot please God (Romans 8:8). Left to our own devices, we will never walk worthy of our calling, and never be able to pray as Jesus prayed:

"I glorified You on the earth; I completed the work that You gave Me to do."
- John 17:4

By yielding to the discipling pattern of Christ, in the Spirit of Christ, we will be transformed by the renewing of our minds (Romans 12:1-2) and through encounters with the Lord by the Spirit (2 Corinthians 3:18). This is most often experienced on a practical level through relationships with spiritual fathers and mentors.

Here's what submission to elders/mentors can look like in practical outworking:

From Greg Austin:

My first experience with "ministry" and authority came soon after I sensed God's call in that direction. I began working under a local pastor. I was saved, filled with the Spirit, called of God, anointed and excited. My first true "ministry position" began on a Monday morning. When I arrived at the church, the pastor led me to my first assignment. Stacked outside next to a wall of the church was a large pile of used lumber. The pastor said: "Those boards are all full of nails. We can't use them until the nails are pulled. Here's a hammer. Lunch is at noon."

Frustrated, even offended that my "anointing" was being wasted on wood, I pulled nails all that day and the day following. "I did this stuff when I was a fourteen-year old nail driver," I complained to myself. "This is ridiculous. I should be out praying for the sick, setting captives free, preaching the Word of God! I should be doing something to at least prepare for ministry!"

It took several days for me to cool off enough for the Lord to speak to me, and when He did, His words were brief, but powerful. "You ARE preparing for the ministry. Pull the nails and Praise Me." I thank God that I finally recognized that the dead man was trying to revive, and that I was a new creature in Christ who needed to learn to submit before I would be ready to instruct. Without submission to those God has placed over us, we prove our immaturity. God will not release us to "rule over many things" until we have first been found to be faithful "over a few things."

I had a similar experience. Mine involved a mop! – Steve Crosby

Mine was cleaning toilets! – Don Atkin

At its heart the call to discipleship means submission, dying daily to futile self-effort, dreams of grandeur, to hopeless laboring in the flesh, and to the systems and values taught us by a world out of sync with God. It is choosing the resurrection life that Jesus brings us on the other side of the cross.

5. SUBMISSION TO THE BODY

Submitting to one another in the fear of God. - Ephesians 5:21

Humanistic religion effortlessly recognizes and submits to a superior and usually invisible divine figure, but recoils at submission to another person (not even a prophet or an apostle) but

simply a peer, the “one another” in whom the Spirit of God dwells. This crucial test reveals our true spirituality and maturity.

In an hour when many believers have experienced the leading of the Holy Spirit to leave the institutional traditional church in search of a more biblically based worship and life experience, the following truths remain constant: God’s plan for individuals is found within the context of His Body, the Church.

Forms of church expression, traditional versus house church, institutional versus organic church should not be confused or necessarily equated with the genuine church Jesus declared He would build. The key is to differentiate between “body” and “institution,” between living organism and lifeless organization.

Life begets structure. Structure (regardless of what type) does **not** beget life. Our values and mission vision should dictate form. Form should neither limit nor compromise values or mission. The reason the Spirit of God moved on the formless deep in Genesis 1, bringing order and structure, was because they were necessary to sustain life. Life is the goal, not merely order. All of God’s order, without life, is not yet “good.” Only when life is manifest can it be called as God did in Genesis—good. Order serves life

While we may not yet be able to cogently identify and define the church that is appearing, what is of supreme importance is that while we may leave one tradition, we dare not in our zeal create another—inadvertently or consciously. Regardless of the expression or form the church may take, the Body of Christ, the Church of Jesus remains, and within this context believers find origin, identity, meaning, purpose, and destiny.

Submission to the Body means, in part, recognizing the Spirit of God within the Body and submitting to the Father’s authority as it is manifested through the Body. This is not a call to submission to man’s authority manifested through a denomination, presbytery, fellowship, parish, or even an apostolic network. Heaven’s call is to humble submission to one another as we seek to follow and walk with Jesus.

Perhaps you are currently contemplating a departure from a traditional church structure. While God indeed may be the genesis of your consideration, stay connected until you know without doubting that God is transplanting you. Don’t leave your roots exposed to the elements. It is better to be part of a body where reformation may not yet be recognized, than to be a “Lone Ranger” with no committed relationships.

True, godly relationships will always include accountability. Parents often tell their erring children, “If I didn’t love you, I wouldn’t correct you.” The same is true in the Body of Christ. Within such a relationship, being accountable is neither arduous nor negative, and does not require the familiar “trappings” that we have known as “church.” Traditional church dogma is based on structures, while God’s governmental structure is based upon relationships. It is important to have the “Amen!” of the Spirit within you regarding your placement.

**Relational accountability is essential to our participation
in the unfolding purposes of God.**

Both mutual accountability among brethren and accountability to those who have been given oversight are necessary for true spiritual maturity to occur. The Holy Spirit of God establishes righteous accountability in Christ. Although we serve according to the example of Jesus Christ, we are not merely servants. It is primarily relational accountability that facilitates our growing into full and experiential sonship, and subsequently into full participation in the reformation of the church. First, we realize our place in the family, and then we find that we have a part in “the family business.”

The life of Christ is by definition, submissive and accountable, if indeed it is Christ’s very life in us. It has to be, and it has to manifest. However, you can produce accountability from the Adamic nature and not possess the life of Christ. Accountability is a by-product, a fruit, of something else. It is not a free-standing entity of its own. If we preach and experience the life, we will get the fruit quite effortlessly. We don’t preach accountability. We preach Christ, accurately, incarnationally, empowered, and accountability will result.

Brick masons understand the importance of aligning bricks so that they are level, square and plumb. The Bible describes disciples as “living stones” that are being built together as a habitation for God. Scripture also uses the human body as a metaphor. Bodies sometimes need a chiropractic adjustment. We desire for Father to ask us the Solomon question: “What’s your dream, how can I help you?” Filled with His life-giving Spirit, and rightly ordered in heart and relationships by His divine Hand, He will give us the desires of our hearts.

PART II THE DNA OF KINGDOM AUTHORITY - WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE? HOW DOES IT WORK?

The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed.
– Romans 8:19 NIV

It could be said that the issue of this essay is the recovery of God’s DNA in authority on earth. It is a very real battle for spiritual DNA. What follows is our estimation of some of the genetic structure that makes up Christ’s authority DNA.

1. KINGDOM AUTHORITY IS SUBMISSIVE

A father notices that his five-year-old son is standing up in the back seat of the car, and instructs him, “Son, sit down and buckle your seat belt!” The son ignores his dad, who then more emphatically says, “Son, sit down and buckle your seat belt, right now!” Again, he is ignored. “If you don’t sit down and buckle your seat belt now, I will stop the car, we will both get out of the car, and you will be sorry!” (Meaning: “I’m going to HURT you at the God-provided spot on your body which cannot be damaged.” Or, “I am going to get to the “seat” of this problem with the “board” of “education!”) The boy sits down, and the father hears him mumbling, “I’m sitting down on the outside, but I’m still standing up on the inside!”

Many who consider themselves adults are “still standing up on the inside,” waiting until obedience is forced, either by direct command or by circumstances.

When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. – 1 Corinthians 13:11

Submissiveness (an inward attitude) is even more foundational to the Christian life and witness than obedience (an outward action). Our inward attitude will—sooner or later—drive our outward actions. Behavior modification (in the world and in the church) is no substitute for conversion and the renewing of our minds.

This is not a concept that can be understood by natural humanity (the unregenerate Adamic nature), nor a command that can be obeyed by carnal humanity. Only the *new creation*, formed from *heaven's Seed* can experience the dimensions of God's authority. This is the unprecedented and supernatural life of a *new species* in the earth. We like the way Warren Litzman explains this: "If any man be in Christ, he is a new race..." Warren goes on to explain every race began with the seed of one man, and reproduced from there. Again, It's all about the DNA of Heaven.

The principle of God's universal authority applies in the civil and familial arenas of life for all mankind. However, the capacity for true and full obedience is only found in and among the new creation. **The operative nature of ecclesial authority is "love."** Therefore, by love (the fruit of the Holy Spirit within and upon believers) they are uniquely empowered to excel in civil and familial arenas as well as parts of the body of Christ.

Christ in us, portraying the higher thoughts and ways of God, and demonstrating the way of the Spirit in true humility in the face of authority. The Spirit of God is still honoring the Father by honoring those who are given authority in the earth. Understanding this, we will no longer vilify people in places of authority. For, in doing so, we are vilifying God! On the other hand, when we honor **all people** (1 Peter 2:17) we give honor to God.

2. KINGDOM AUTHORITY IS JURISDICTIONALLY DISTINCT

The three realms of authority—familial, civil, and ecclesial—do not necessarily operate identically. While the concept of submission is identical in each, the expression of submission is not. We must not blur the distinctions.

Civil authority is positional, potentially coercive (no choice involved), normally non-relational, and static (rigid). That is, civil authority only changes (in our society) through the electoral or legislative process in civil government. Legitimate kingdom authority in the family and church is not static. It is relational, volitional (in the church), and most importantly seasonal. Since its foundation is relational, it's expression changes as the relationships change as the result of growth in the seasons of natural and spiritual life. (See Part VI of this essay).

Wholly furnished with power from on high, anointed saints are equipped for exemplary demonstrations of the kingdom of God in societal and family life. In the familial or ecclesial (spiritual) arenas of life, silence and submission are not biblically required in the face of abuse, injustice, or corruption. We do submit when these authorities are moral, ethical, legal, and jurisdictionally proper.

It's possible to get hold of a legitimate concept of God and make God submissive to His own principles as if the principle itself has within it animating life. If we animate a "thing," like accountability, and present it as something to be pursued, we have subordinated God. This is, of course, fundamentally idolatrous. We pursue God, and we get accountability. We don't pursue accountability thinking we get God. It is a root and fruit issue. **Life is the root.** Accountability is the fruit.

But this matter is so slippery because we often think we are representing God's interests by advocating for one of His principles, when in reality, we are advocating a form of religious idolatry. There is no substitute for the root and fountain of life. Cut off from Him/It, any principle becomes an idol, even when it is a good principle.

We have not seen a more submissive man in history than Jesus Christ, who is *in us—the hope of glory* (Colossians 1:27). Jesus modeled the new creation life of love. Jesus lived His life on earth completely under authority by honoring relationships. When He was young, He was in subjection to His parents. After His baptism, the Holy Spirit led Him into the wilderness. After emerging into ministry, He only did what He saw His Father doing. That's what sons do! As *He is, so are we in the world* (1 John 4:17).

Because the submissive Christ is in us, we can be *salt and light* (Matthew 5:13-16) in any situation. Kingdom authority happens by influence. One of the reasons we should not be too hasty to remove ourselves from present situations that are less than perfect is because of the potential loss of kingdom influence at our departure. There is no perfect situation among today's options.

While some may eventually close, other local church expressions are being transformed from within and may eventually flow together with others in their geo-political sphere. Don't be distracted by form; rather look for substance. God looks upon the heart. Learn to eat the meat and spit out the bones. Extend the same mercy and grace that you need extended to you! The Spirit of God will not lead you to be critical or judgmental. He will lead you to love and pray.

**Bottom line, we are accountable to God.
That accountability is worked out on practical levels
through our accountability to one another.**

3. KINGDOM AUTHORITY MUST BE SPIRIT-SOURCED AND SPIRIT-LED

*Therefore, submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether to the king as supreme, or to governors, as to those who are sent by Him for the punishment of evildoers and for the praise of those who do good. **For this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men**— as free, yet not using liberty as a cloak for vice, but as bondservants of God. Honor all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king.* – 1 Peter 2:13-17

The obvious question is, "What if those in authority are unfair, ill-advised, could cause undue suffering?" Peter continues: *Servants, be submissive to your masters with all fear, **not only***

to the good and gentle, but also to the harsh. For this is commendable, if because of conscience toward God one endures grief, suffering wrongfully (Verses 18-19).

This conscientious conduct is evidence of a new creation (II Corinthians 5:17), a new species in the earth, demonstrating the kingdom of heaven by the power of the Source of all authority, God Himself.

This is the faithful and overcoming lifestyle that comes from the Seed, the Seed of *Christ in you, the hope of glory* (Galatians 4:19; Colossians 1:27)! This kind of *conscience toward God* (Acts 23:1; I Peter 2:19) only comes by the *renewing of the mind* (Romans 12:2) and the embracing of God's higher thoughts and ways (Isaiah 55:8).

This does not mean that we are to simply “roll over and play dead” in the face of abusive or unjust leaders in the familial or ecclesial arenas. There is also a place for peacefully opposing prevailing civil authorities (e.g. Martin Luther King, Gandhi, Nelson Mandela, opposition to the Third Reich, Stalin, etc).

However, it is beyond the scope of this writing to address the many specific challenges that may confront the believer with regard to abusive, unjust, or manifestly evil civic leadership. When specific situations arise, our trust is in the Holy Spirit and His promise to provide wisdom and direction for that moment. Jesus resisted unjust authorities in His life (Roman and Jewish), and submitted to them in His passion. There is no “canned answer” substitute for being led by the Spirit. May we be gracious with one another in these matters.

4. KINGDOM AUTHORITY BEARS THE AROMA OF CHRIST

The following quote from David VanCronkite expresses the contrast between what Jesus modeled and what we see today.

“The Kingdom is relational, not organizational. It is a supernatural expression of His essence. The Church must have a religious structural organization today because it refuses to be relational and disregards the supernatural. It needs a religious form to let men know if they are meeting the expectations. Kingdom needs no man to affirm, only man to love and encourage, giving the same grace and mercy to one another that is received from God.”

We must go all the way back to Jesus' earth walk for an authentic model of kingdom life which is to govern the church, that being the interaction between Jesus and His Father. We are being raised up to manifest His life and authority—a *supernatural expression of His essence*—in the earth.

Humility

God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble (James 4:6). So much of what we have seen and experienced in what we have called “church” has reeked of the boastful pride of life. We are watching leaders succumb to the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the boastful pride of life (1John 2:15-17).

Purity

We are not to be driven by passions, possessions or position. Our only ambition should be to serve the purpose of our Father, by doing what we see Him doing. Jesus did nothing of His own initiative (John 5:19, 30). He is our model for true spiritual authority. Jesus did not drive people; He led them—those who chose to follow Him. He explained how the shepherd functions:

Love

He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. And when he brings out his own sheep, he goes before them; and they follow him, for they know his voice. Yet they will by no means follow a stranger, but will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of a stranger. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep. I know My Sheep, and am known by My own. My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. - John 10:3-5, 11, 14, 27

Spiritual relationships should be mutually confirmed. The fact that we cannot hear any particular “voice” may not mean that they themselves are questionable so much as an indication that they may not be relationally joined.

Relationships

The government of God is carried out through relationships. Spiritual authority is rightly working when believers are accountable where they have been placed (1 Corinthians 12:18). A proof of God’s placement is the ability to hear what the Spirit is saying to the church, in particular through godly servant-leaders and fellow-believers.

Following one of Jesus’ teachings in the synagogue in Capernaum, many of His disciples responded, “This is a hard saying; who can understand it?” In the same way that He explained the contrast of two realms to Nicodemus (John 3), Jesus said to these people:

It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life (John 6:63). *Knowing from the beginning those who would not believe and would betray Him* (John 6:64),

He revealed a principle that also applies to the setting of order in His body:

Appointments

“Therefore I have said to you that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted to him by My Father.” From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more. Then Jesus said to the twelve, “Do you also want to go away?” But Simon Peter answered Him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.” – John 6: 65-68

A significant portion of our storehouse, the words of eternal life, will be found flowing through the relationships that God has appointed for us. Truth will be spoken in love, with humility, from pure hearts of servant leaders who will lay down their lives for the sheep (John 10:11).

We will grow up in all aspects into the Head, Christ (Ephesians 4:15), under the protection and with the provision of good shepherds. We will discover our vocations and destiny in the safe environment which they provide. We will be prepared for and released into our life's work by ministry gifts (Ephesians 4:11) that are flowing in God's anointing.

5. HOW DOES SPIRITUAL AUTHORITY WORK?

I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that you may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. - 1 Timothy 2:1-4

God's thoughts and ways are higher than man's thoughts and ways (Isaiah 55:9). We are called upon to seek Him while He may be found (Verse 6), repenting of our instinctive human concepts of authority, and embracing what is revealed to us by the Spirit of God. "Spiritual authority is exercised **within** the church, not **over** the Church." – David Newby. *Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers . . . not as lords, but being examples* (1 Peter 5:2-3).

Much of the church is yet under Gentile authority. Temporal, static, positional authority, while established by God to govern human institutions and situations, falls short of the will of God for the church. Human institutions, no matter how rightly motivated, cannot provide heaven's government. While positional authority is normative in the civil arena, "*it shall not be so among you*" is Jesus' word on the subject. Only when love fails or immaturity reigns may such positional authority become necessary in the familial or ecclesial arenas. Perfected love is our goal, not the maintenance of order. Perfect love rules in heaven, and earth is supposed to reflect heaven (as it is in heaven, etc.) Expressed authority is the restraining necessity upon a fallen creation. It is God's preventative against chaos, which is the tendency of all things natural when the love reign of Christ is not effective.

Our attempts to organize and structure an acceptable wineskin for the church will always fall short of the divine ideal. No institution or facility is the true wineskin of God. All are the products of man's creativity and ingenuity. At best, present-day structures, organizations and facilities are humanly devised scaffolds. At worst, they pervert and limit the purpose of God to fill the earth with His government and glory through mature sons.

The principle was made evident when a righteous and good King David determined to build a house for God. The Lord's response was simply: "*You shall not build Me a house to dwell in*" (1 Chronicles 17). Jesus told His disciples, "*I will build My church . . .*"

And God has already begun to pour out His Wine into His acceptable wineskin.

The body of Christ IS the New Wineskin!

When Jesus walked on the earth, His body was heaven's wineskin. He was filled with the wine of God. Since His ascension, Jesus has a new body on the earth now. When Jesus

was here in bodily form, His earthly body (birthed by Mary) was the Wineskin. Today, His body on the earth is His wineskin.

The church is God's acceptable wineskin, but the church is not a building, it's not a program, and it's not an organization. God's wineskin is a people (1 Peter 2:10), living stones (1 Peter 2:5), built together through relationships to receive and rightly steward the wine of His Presence and the temple of His Habitation (Ephesians 2:22).

Many saints who do not struggle with accountability anywhere else are struggling in the church. They are fitting into the world's systems, but not into the religious systems. Hearts given to the Lord Jesus Christ are frustrated in their search for placement (1 Corinthians 12:18) and purpose (1 Corinthians 12:7; Ephesians 2:10) in the body of Christ.

This revelation will necessarily revolutionize our entire concept of the church. The contrast is now becoming clear: *That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit* (John 3:6). We are to be accountable to authority in every human realm. However, the church is neither birthed nor nurtured under humanly devised authority.

6. KINGDOM AUTHORITY IS A PILGRIMAGE

Blessed is the man whose heart is set on pilgrimage. – Psalm 84:5

While some are *pioneers* and others are *settlers*, we are all to be *pilgrims*. We pilgrims understand that, as *sojourners*, we are *seeking a city whose builder and maker is God* (Hebrews 11:10). Therefore, we *abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, having our conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that they may glorify God in the day of visitation* (1 Peter 2:11-12).

Settlers may be content within the confines of their present church situation. *Pioneers* may be looking for more. Both are encouraged to seek the heart of God. Both settlers and pioneers are to have hearts set on *pilgrimage*.

The bride, the Lamb's wife, the great city, the holy Jerusalem, will descend out of heaven from God, having the glory of God. – Revelation 21:9-11

The glory of God, the government of God, descends out of heaven. The authority of God originates from Him and points to Him. Wherever Christ is manifest, His government is present. That includes in one another. We can learn to submit to one another as we recognize one another according to Christ, not according to the flesh.

We can discover who we are in Him. We can look upon one another after the Spirit. We can see Christ in one another, *the hope of glory*, and recognize the authority of God in our lives with one another. We can! We must!

PART III NEW CREATION LEADERSHIP

The next step in reformation will require fresh and profound revelation about spiritual authority.

Reformation of the church will require a brand new architectural design!

According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid a foundation. – I Corinthians 3:10

God set Jeremiah over the nations and kingdoms, *to root out and pull down, to destroy and to throw down, to build and to plant* (Jeremiah 1:10). This is a prophetic look at what needs to happen today.

1. PROPHETS IN TANDEM WITH APOSTLES

Both prophets and apostles are to be involved in fulfilling this Jeremiah commission—but not alone and isolated from one another. *The household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets* (Ephesians 2:19-22), needs these two grace gifts to labor together.

The simultaneous exercise of (1) the prophetic grace *to root out and pull down, to destroy and to throw down*, and (2) the apostolic grace *to plant and build up*, will lead to an unprecedented response from believers. There is a spiritually instinctive desire within the hearts of those who *are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit* (Ephesians 2:22) for authentic, safe, Christ-like, foundational leadership.

Most prophets and apostles are still operating independently, so the “Jeremiah commission” goes unfulfilled to date. Many prophets are following a variety of rabbit trails, and some apostles are still trying to fit into old wineskins. There are apostles who are suspicious of prophets and prophets who are not walking and working with apostles. This is changing as God knits hearts and lives together in His family, and connects foundational brethren in the family business of the kingdom. Our trust is in Him. Jesus is Lord of relationships. Much that is to be rooted out, pulled down, destroyed and thrown down remains. And much that is to be built and planted has not yet begun to appear or to be recognized.

There must be a radical mutual accountability among prophets and apostles before a radical reformation of the church will take place.

Yoked together in Jesus, apostles oversee the construction and prophets provide guidance and encouragement for the job being done. Because they are together, apostles are free to focus upon the master plan, and prophets are free to focus upon both the logos and the

rhema of God. Subsequent to these developments, the teachers will be able to begin grounding the church, building on a right foundation, under proper government and guidance, rather than focusing upon their own perspectives and teaching their pet doctrines.

God establishes His order, appointing *first* apostles, *second* prophets, *third* teachers (1 Corinthians 12:28). Yet even in this “first,” “second” and “third” order, many miss an important truth: Ephesians 2:20 speaks of the household of God “*having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone.*” The apostolic and prophetic are foundational. The foundation is both crucial to the overall construction of the building and it is the lowliest part of the structure. Without a true understanding of this order, we wrongly move once again into a hierarchical definition of leadership and authority and we seek the “after that” list—miracles, gifts, healings, etc. or we wrongly elevate the apostle or the prophet to a place God never established. God can give it all to us, as He wills, as we maintain His priorities, seeking first His government (kingdom).

2. MINISTERS WITH RIGHT HEARTS

If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work. - 1 Timothy 3:1

First, the “b” in *bishop* is not capitalized (in contrast to today’s practice). Also, note that it is the work that they desire, not the position. Bishops, overseers, elders, are initially positioned by apostolic appointment, to serve as overseers and examples to the flock:

Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. - 1 Peter 5:2-3

The emphasis is upon serving. Those who rule well are deserving of double honor (1 Timothy 5:17), but should not demand or necessarily expect that double honor. We should be extremely wary of those who demand five-star hotels, limo service, or luxury rental cars, and huge honorariums. Perhaps they still love the world and the things of the world.

Peter also identified himself as an elder (1 Peter 5:1). Surely, the standards to which elders are called apply also to apostles! Paul protected his testimony:

I was a burden to no one—in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often. Beaten, stoned, shipwrecked, perils, weariness, toil, sleeplessness, hunger and thirst, fastings, cold and nakedness. – 2 Corinthians 11

Above all of these, he was daily burdened by his deep concern for all the churches (2 Corinthians 11:28). He had a true apostolic heart—the heart of Jesus—who *made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men, humbled Himself* (Philippians 2:7-8).

3. MINISTERS WITH RIGHT PRIORITIES

The husband of one wife, one who rules his own household well, having his children in submission with all reverence (for if a man does not know how to rule his own house,

how will he take care of the church of God?). Not a novice, lest he fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover he must have a good report of those which are without; lest he fall in to the reproach of the devil . – 1 Timothy 3:2, 4-7.

Four key opportunities for proving one's ability to serve in God's leadership service are: (1) wife, (2) household, (3) children and (4) testimony of unbelievers. God is concerned about His wife, His household, His children, and unbelievers. He does not want them in the care of, or handled by, unproven, prematurely appointed leaders.

1. Wife

How can a man who cannot take care of his wife take care of the church—Jesus' wife? While fidelity, protection and provision are essential, wives are also to be loved! It does not take long to discern whether or not a wife is loved by her husband. The woman is the glory of the man (1 Corinthians 11:7).

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such things, but that she should be holy and without blemish. So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. – Ephesians 5:25-28

Husbands, likewise, dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered. – 1 Peter 3:7

2. Household

How can a man who cannot take care of his household take care of the church of God? The household of God is a people, not a place. Nevertheless, servant-leadership among the people requires being fiscally responsible. We are not talking about a pop prosperity message. We are talking about *great grace* upon the saints, so there is *no one among us who lacks*. (Acts 4:34)

For all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, and laid them at the apostles' feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need. – Acts 4:34-35

Not long afterward it was brought to the apostles' attention that the needs of some widows were not being met. They immediately administrated the fulfilling of those needs. Their proven status as guardians (protectors) and stewards (providers) was apparent in the household of God.

3. Children

How can a man who cannot take care of his own children take care of God's children? *And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord* (Ephesians 6:4). It is the affirmation and exhortation of fathers that results in the motivation of children. Fathers' comfort gives the security, and their charge imparts vision and destiny (See *1Thessalonians 2:11-12*).

Undisciplined, unruly, or unloved children are indications that a man is not yet ready to rule in the household of God. Though the father may live in the home, these signs of neglect are indications of wrong priorities.

Proper care of our homes, families and finances is a foundational qualification for righteous ruling in the house of God. There is a mutual accountability among family members, as well as accountability for the stewardship of any material possessions.

4. Relationships outside the community of believers

This is hard for many to swallow, but the Scriptures teach that the testimony of unbelievers must be considered when evaluating someone for "ministry" or church leadership.

When Paul refers to "those who are without" he is referring to those outside the community of faith: unbelievers. This is a matter that we "church folk" are often not serious about. A person's testimony and relationship with unbelievers is part of the qualification to lead in God's Church. This is particularly true in the matter of morals and ethics—how we live behaviorally before the eyes of the unbelievers in our spheres of life. Contextually in the *1Timothy* passage, it can also link to the idea of not having any criminal or legal judgments pending against a leadership candidate.

If a person walks on water and prophesies like Jeremiah on Sunday, but cheats on his taxes and is an overbearing, offensive, religious zealot at his place of work, Monday through Saturday, that individual does not belong in any form of church leadership. If the individual's relationships with the unbelievers in his sphere of influence are not right, that individual should not be in church leadership.

4. MINISTERS WITH RIGHT UNDERSTANDING

We must understand that (1) we are ministers of the grace of God, by the grace of God (2) we are oracles of the word of God, (3) we are messengers, not managers, presidents, or kings and (4) we have specific spheres of God-given responsibility, with corresponding authority.

1. Ministers by Grace

Paul said, *by grace I am what I am* (*1 Corinthians 15:10*). *To each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift* (*Ephesians 4:7*). Apostleship, as with all gifts, is an extension of God's grace to His creation.

For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things that are mighty; and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence. – 1 Corinthians 1:26-29

We have become partakers and dispensers of His glory because of His graceful choice. We live and serve by His unmerited favor and power. We are graced with the Spirit of sonship that we might be joint heirs with Christ (Romans 8:14-18). Remember: *God is opposed to the proud and gives grace to the humble* (James 4:6).

2. We are to speak as *oracles* (1 Peter 4:11).

The word is not ours, but His. It needs none of our embellishments. God does not need our help. His *word is alive, powerful, and sharper than a two-edged sword* (Hebrews 4:12). It stands on its own, and *will not return unto Him void*. It will accomplish His purpose in sending it forth (Isaiah 55:11).

We should not unnecessarily raise our voice, or shout at people or talk down to people. We should avoid being driven by religious spirits to change our voice quality or demeanor. We are simply oracles of God. The Author does the work through the Spirit as we, in faith, share what we have been given to share.

We are to *speak the truth in love* (Ephesians 4:15). *God is love* (1 John 4:8). Anything less than love is not fit to bear the truth to others. Love makes the word acceptable, palatable, overriding all prejudice and previous pain. Love cuts through the obstacles of the flesh and pierces the heart.

3. Appropriate self-evaluation

In Chapters 2 and 3 of Revelation Jesus dictated seven letters to John, who was an apostolic father to the seven churches in Asia. These seven individual evaluations and directives were addressed to the *messengers* of these individual cities/regions. These apostles were in John's sphere, and accountable to him.

However, not all are apostles or prophets or teachers (1 Corinthians 12:29). Not all are elders (overseers). There are gifts of helps and administrations. There are managers. It is honorable—equally valuable—to be called by God to the ministries of helps, administrations, management.

Jesus dictated through John individual letters to the messengers of the seven churches in Asia (Revelation 2-3). We are writing to *messengers*, not managers. So many who have been graced as messengers have allowed themselves to be unduly burdened as managers. Please note how the Lord's first twelve messengers preserved their rightful role:

Seek out from among you seven men . . . whom we may appoint over this business; but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word. – Acts 6:3-4

Organization is necessary in the body of Christ. Unnecessary organizational encumbrances will be eliminated as the church is reformed. Developing a right understanding of these things will set us on course for kingdom fruitfulness.

4. Spheres of relationship and influence

Knowing our spheres of responsibility and corresponding authority (2 Corinthians 10:13) helps us to be properly yoked with Jesus, whose yoke is easy and burden is light (Matthew 11:28-30). Rest for our souls is the fruit of being rightly ordered.

Sons do what they see their Father doing (John 5:19). No less. No more. Maturity releases us from pleasing men, from our own selfish ambitions, and frees us to walk in peace. (We are praying that we may grow up before we grow old!)

God is not establishing many individual kingdoms.

Realizing that the poor will always be with us (Matthew 26:11), we learn to not be motivated merely by discernible need. Rather, we become motivated by obedience that will address both perceived need and need which may not be apparent to the natural eye or the mind. So many concerns are wiped away when we know who we are, where we are placed, and what we are to do. Only this kind of mature understanding qualifies us to lead as servants in this greatest time in history for the reformation of the church.

As we come to realize our identities, our places in the body, and our spheres of responsibility (with corresponding authority), we will *in due time* (1 Peter 5:6) see exponential increase in our influence and effectiveness in the kingdom. We will bear fruit that abides (John 15:8).

PART IV APOSTOLIC DIMENSIONS OF AUTHORITY

1. POSITIONAL VS. SPIRITUAL AUTHORITY

Jesus Christ commissioned the apostles:

All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. – Matthew 28:18-20

He promised:

I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you. A little while longer and the world will see Me no more, but you will see Me. – John 14:18-19

He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me, and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him. – John 14:18-21

Even the demons are subject to us in Your name. "Behold, I give you authority." – Luke 10:17-20

When we are under God's authority, the authority that we have comes from God. There are spheres, boundaries, and limitations on all God-given authority. Even when spheres, boundaries, and limitations are exceeded and/or violated, we are still accountable for how we respond. All that we think, say or do in every circumstance is to glorify the King.

Authentic spiritual authority flows from the throne of God into the earth realm through those who have been *raised up together, and made to sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus* (Ephesians 2:4-7). Christ Jesus rules, He is in us (Colossians 1:27), and we are in Him (Colossians 3:1-4).

Here's an important insight:

**Jesus is *Lord and King*,
but He normally functions in and among His people
as *Christ, the Anointed One*.
God has set humanity over the works of His hands,
But we must learn to function in His *anointing*.
This is the clear difference between
positional authority and *spiritual* authority.**

He is our pattern and example (Luke 4:18-19).

God has set man over the works of His hands, and put all things in subjection under his feet. He left nothing that is not put under him. But now we do not yet see all things put under him. But we see Jesus (From Hebrews 2:5-13). *We are running with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith* (From Hebrews 12:1-2.).

We would already see all things put under us if positional authority were all that is needed to realize God's kingdom. However, it is the anointing that breaks yokes (Isaiah 10:27), not Gentile authority! God has already declared our position as joint heirs with Christ (Romans 8:17). But, to rule and reign with Him (II Timothy 2:12) gradually emerges to the extent of our maturing as the glorious bride, the church (Ephesians 5:27).

We have already received the crown of anointing (Leviticus 21:10-12) as the virtuous bride of Christ (Proverbs 31:10). We have received an anointing from the Holy One (I John 2:20). Although the anointing abides in us, we are still learning how to abide in the Son and in the Father (Verse 24), to abide in the anointing (Verse 27).

Anointed spiritual authority was prophesied by Isaiah and demonstrated by Jesus. Because of the significance of this point, we will consider both of these passages:

“Behold! My Servant whom I uphold, My Elect One in whom My soul delights! I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the Gentiles. He will not cry out, nor raise His voice, nor cause His voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed He will not break, and smoking flax He will not quench; He will bring forth justice for truth. He will not fail nor be discouraged, Till He has established Justice in the earth; and the coastlands shall wait for His law.” - Isaiah 42:1-4

“In an acceptable time I have heard You, and in the day of salvation I have helped You; I will preserve You and give You as a covenant to the people, to restore the earth, To cause them to inherit the desolate heritages; that You may say to the prisoners, Go forth,’ to those who are in darkness, ‘show yourselves.’” - Isaiah 49:8-9

“Behold! My Servant whom I have chosen, My Beloved in whom My soul is well pleased! I will put My Spirit upon Him, and He will declare justice to the Gentiles. He will not quarrel nor cry out, nor will anyone hear His voice in the streets. A bruised reed He will not break, and smoking flax He will not quench, Till He sends forth justice to victory; and in His name Gentiles will trust.” - Matthew 12:18-21

We can look at these prophetic passages and see the higher ways and thoughts of God as they were demonstrated through the earthly life of Jesus. This will help us to evaluate what the anointing looks like in action! Notice that in the four gospels, Jesus only used the word, “Authority,” a few times:

- He did not break bruised reeds or quench smoking flax
- He identified the exercise of Gentile authority as Lording it over others
- He responded to questions about where He got His authority
- He used the word in the parable of the servants
- He acknowledged that He had been given authority
- He claimed all authority, both in heaven and on earth, while commissioning the apostles.

That’s it!

Those who have been given authority do not need to talk about it! Jesus simply lived in the anointing that He had received from Father. True spiritual authority is not exercised; it operates within the anointing.

We will learn how to abide in the anointing that breaks yokes of bondage off God’s precious creation and releases captives into their rightful inheritance as sons.

We are holding to the prophetic promise spoken through Isaiah 9:7:

Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.

We are being **gathered from** among the nations in order to be **given to** the nations! We are positioned for the inheritance through our adoption as sons. Creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. The last Man, through the sons, will fulfill the original commission that was given to the first man:

Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over every living thing that moves on the earth. – Genesis 1:28

Most people will discover that their primary purpose is to be walked out in their homes, in the marketplaces of education, science, commerce, medicine, industry, the arts, etc., not as a “hireling” or “CEO” of a religious institution. They are to be equipped and under-girded through placement in the body of Christ so that their kingdom light will freely shine wherever they are and whatever they are doing

2. APOSTOLIC GRACE

The authority given to apostles is to be held lightly, exercised faithfully, expressed relationally, and followed willingly. We should not neglect the very nature of God’s First-born Son as we look for His life and ministry flow among men.

Jesus is the Way to the Father (John 14:6), and all believers have *bold access into the Holy of holies* through His blood (Hebrews 4:16). Each of us has been given individual authority that frees us from the past and enables us for the future.

That future is to be found, uncovered, discovered and embraced, within the body of Christ. We have been given *the right to become children of God, through faith in His name* (John 1:12). As we choose to obey and submit to *guardians and stewards* (Galatians 4:1-2) they will help us grow to maturity, and to our places of mutual accountability within the family of God.

God has appointed these in the church, first apostles (1 Corinthians 12:28). Responsibility and the corresponding authority for establishing and overseeing the church is given first to the apostles, and subsequently to elders in cities and regions (Acts 12:23; 1 Titus 1:5).

Does apostolic authority continue after elders (overseers; shepherds) are appointed? Let’s look at a few examples of continuing apostolic oversight.

Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also.

Paul continues with detailed directives throughout the next several verses. It is clear from this passage that the church in Corinth was to (1) relate to Paul, (2) accommodate his schedule, and (3) help him on his way (From 1 Corinthians 16).

Paul was also specific about how they were to receive and treat Timothy. And, he urged them to *submit to everyone who works and labors with them* (1 Corinthians 16:10-16). (Paul was a father who knew who he was, as well as who his children were.)

Apostolic servant-leadership is saturated in love and is decisive, specific, and clear on issues of order, authority, and accountability. The Corinthian Christians were still babes, and needed this kind of clarity. Boundaries are essential for the security of both natural and spiritual children.

Another example is recorded in Acts 20, where Paul summoned the elders from Ephesus to meet him in Miletus. It was no small task for them to do so. Yet, there was no question. They did so. Their inconvenience served Paul's convenience.

3. DIFFERENT ADMINISTRATIONS OF AUTHORITY

Paul's epistle to Philemon, demonstrates how Paul expressed his authority to one who was mature. Philemon was Paul's beloved friend and fellow laborer. You will remember that Jesus called the apostles "friends" only after three years of posturing themselves as servants (John 15:15).

The language of this letter makes it clear that Philemon was a peer in ministry. Paul does exercise his apostolic authority, but in a different way. He appeals to him on behalf of Onesimus. Paul summarizes his appeal with:

Having confidence in your obedience, I write to you, knowing that you will do even more than I say. – Philemon 21

Maturity, peer status, and friendship, do not diminish God's apostolic order and authority. Ways of relating change as people grow in the Lord, much as they do with our children.

Relationships may last a lifetime, but the application of authority in those relationships changes. As a parent your expression of authority is different with a baby, child, adolescent, or adult. It is appropriate to restrain a 4-year-old who is trying to dart across a road. It is not appropriate to hold on to an adult who is trying to pursue a future life plan that you may not agree with.

In the church, the expression of authority changes with a baby, young man, or father (not gender specific). Corinthian babies needed a certain form of strong-handed spiritual parenting from Paul. Their maturity and condition necessitated a certain "style" or expression of authority that would have been inappropriate for Paul's relationships with Timothy or Peter.

Seasonality in authority applies to everyone. Those with authority who don't know how to practically change their approach ("learn to let go") as the "children" mature, whose concept of authority is rigid and static like in the civil realm, will suffer and those under their care will suffer. Those who act adolescently in a premature desire to throw off authority will likewise suffer, as will those around them. In our living out of kingdom authority, all parties must be sensitive and in tune to the seasons of spiritual life.

Paul entrusted spheres of responsibility with corresponding authority to these sons in the faith. He did not interfere with the daily operation of their ministries. He trusted the Holy Spirit to guide and empower them. He knew their character.

Fathers, sons, grandsons (male and female) all make up one family and one kingdom. The flow of authoritative counsel continued to flow from the Holy Spirit through Paul to those whom the Lord had given him. The same is true of today's apostles.

4. ELDERS APPOINTED IN EVERY CITY

We will see kingdom order increase as our understanding of and adherence to this kind of accountability increases. Spiritual order will gradually replace human order. Denominational designations will be overshadowed by citywide and regional identities ~ *the church in Corinth, Rome, etc.*

The softening and purifying of hearts toward God, and the increasing revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ, will cause men and women to reconsider their ways in favor of God's higher thoughts and ways. In time, God will make evident those whom He is placing in overseeing roles. Apostles will emerge, anointed to serve cities and regions. Elders who are relationally connected with apostles and one another will be set in place in each geo-political sphere. They will be found in the gates of cities, sitting with Jesus (see Proverbs 31:23).

The reader might ask at this point, "Who will establish these designations, and who will ensure that leaders will work cooperatively?" The question points back to our former structures, and gets at the weaknesses and failures of our institutional memory, but the answer is simply, "The Lord will do it!" This supernatural church will be led by supernatural means. In our highly competitive church-view with its hierarchical history, in order to transition to the city-wide church it will be required that we adopt the mind of Christ in order to comprehend such supra-denominational expressions of the Lord's Church.

We began this essay by highlighting the essential value of accountability in the process of re-forming (re-forming) the church. We pointed out that God is the highest source of authority and order. We then reminded the reader that all of creation is waiting for the revealing of the sons of God.

Those who are born of the Spirit have God's DNA, and are the true church. This church will be reformed according to His architectural design (revealing how God does and governs life). Apostles are the master builders, who are graced to raise up and release people into a new order of living life before God and man.

**God loves His bride, and is committed to
completing what He has begun.**

We pray that no one will try to "make this happen!" History is filled with accounts of those who tried to make something happen before the proper time and before the proper components were in order. We don't need another "Ishmael."

PART V CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

1. *Accountability* will play a vital part in the unfolding of God's eternal purpose through His reformed Church. The accountability of God's people is necessary for God's order to be manifested and His will to be carried out on the earth as it is in heaven. Each member of the body is to be accountable to the other members, as God places us in His order.

2. *All authority in heaven and on earth* originates with God (Matthew 28:18). Boundaries and spheres measure authority, and those allotted authority are to operate within those limits or allotments (II Corinthians 10:13). The Scripture outlines abuses that, in extreme cases, justify disobedience. Even in such cases, submissive attitudes are to be maintained in a spirit of humility and meekness.

3. While we are subject to Gentile authority within human structures, we are never to exercise such authority (Matthew 20:25-28). We are to manifest God's higher thoughts and ways in our conduct, both in submission to and in the exercise of authority. Gentile authority has no place in the church that Jesus is building. *The kingdom of God is righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit* (Romans 14:17). The church is both the agent and manifestation of His kingdom.

There is an old song that captures the essence of body life. It points out that "the foot bone is connected to the ankle bone, which is connected to the shin bone, which is connected to the knee bone, which is connected to the thigh bone, which is connected to the hip bone, which is connected to the back bone, which is connected to the neck bone, which is connected to the Head!"

All of life flows, in an orderly manner, from the Head to the entire body. This requires order. Positional authority may hold things in place in an orderly way. But, only organic authority releases the flow of Life to all who are connected.

Ox carts are common in India and other Third World cultures. The oxen are equally matched in size and strength. No one puts an elephant and a puppy in the same yoke. They are teams. Some of them differ in color and in gender. But, they are the same type, size and strength.

Jesus invites us into His yoke. He is the firstborn of many brothers. God is bringing many sons to glory. We will do His works according to His capacity, leaving behind our own inadequacies. We are being transformed into His image and likeness to multiply as the growth of His authority expands to fill the whole earth. His authority, His government, and His kingdom on earth as it is in heaven. We have no alternative to being intimately yoked with Jesus and one another according to His placement and order.

The late Bill Britton penned a fitting parable about two young horses romping in open range. It went something like this:

"One day, the king's horseman selected one to be added to the master's stable. Although the other horse missed his friend, he went on enjoying the lush pastureland and running in the fresh breezes. When he felt like it, he would lie down in the warmth of the sun. When he felt like it, he would run as fast as he could until he was totally winded. He would then walk along in his leisurely graze until he had his fill. He was full-bodied, and his coat had a beautiful sheen to it. He often thought to himself, "It just doesn't get any better than this!"

One day, the king's carriage came by, and there—harnessed with three other horses—was his young friend. He asked, "Isn't it uncomfortable for you to wear that harness? To be pull-

ing such a load? To be unable to frolic in the fields, drink from the brook, and nibble on grass at will? I am so sorry for you!”

His friend responded, “I am well-fed. I am brushed daily. I enjoy having the fellowship of other horses, the care of the king’s horseman, and having purpose for my life. You don’t need to feel sorry for me.” His free-spirited friend, chuckled as he kicked up his heels and proudly demonstrated his liberty by running off and leaving the king’s horse in the dust.

But then, drought hit the land, the brook and the grass dried up. There was inadequate food and water. For the first time in his life, he began to hunger and thirst. There was no rain or relief in sight. The young horse began to worry. He lost weight. The sheen was gone. The energy was gone. There was no more running and leaping. There was no more grazing and sipping. There was only hunger—starvation. The young horse’s freedom became meaningless in his struggle for survival.

One day, he heard the rumble of the king’s carriage, accompanied by the “clip-clop” of the team’s shod feet on the dusty road. Soon, he could see cloud of dust as the carriage approached. He saw how well fed and well groomed his friend and the other horses were, how they held their heads up high and their tails were like flags in the breeze.

He finally understood. He finally ‘got it.’” May we all!

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