

*Authority Begins
at the Cross*

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

One of the greatest problems for Christians today is their failure to recognize the need to come under bona fide spiritual authority. Encounters with the illegitimate authority of someone who was abusive and cruel have left some people with deep-rooted problems, which, in many cases, are never resolved.

In this booklet, you will see that behind the authority of God is a love that sent His only Son to die for the sins of the world, a love that came to save the world and not to condemn it. Before God ever *commanded* us to love (John 13:34-35), He first *commended* His love toward us, while we were sinners (Romans 5:8). Authority that is not backed by the love of the Cross is not bona fide authority; it will only drive people away from God. But true authority always draws people to the God who is love.

Chapter One

THE AUTHORITY
OF PERFECT LOVE

God is love. God the Father manifested that love by giving His Son, Jesus, to be our Savior. “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins” (see 1 John 4:8-10).

“Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment....” Because we now have confidence in God’s love, we can have *boldness* at the Bema Seat.

“There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.”

“We love him, because he first loved us” (1 John 4:17-19).

In the light of these Scriptures, “herein is love” takes on a new meaning. We have confidence in God’s love, and we will have boldness on the day of judgment.*

The passage in 1 John is relevant to the subject of authority because divine love is the authority that God exercises over the human race and over His Church. Jesus Christ died for the sins of the whole world (John 3:16; 1 John 2:2). This means that Divine Love died for the sins of everyone. But even though Christ died for every soul He created, no one can be saved without believing and coming to God by grace through faith in Christ's death, burial, and resurrection. Still, Jesus died for us.

God was in Christ, and Christ was in the world, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing our trespasses unto us (2 Corinthians 5:19). Before love ever exercises authority, it does everything to lay down its life for those who will *submit* to bona fide authority.

The authority over the Church is love—it is love that provides and protects; it does not usurp authority or invade privacy. It does not interfere with a person's believer-priesthood. Love protects the right of every person to stand or fall before God (Romans 14:4).

People who are afraid of authority simply don't know what it is. They equate God's authority with how they have been mistreated by illegitimate authority. But bona fide authority is

based on Calvary's love. Remember, God is love (1 John 4:8), and He manifested love by giving His life.

Authority in the Government of the Church

“As the LORD commanded Moses his servant, so did Moses command Joshua, and so did Joshua; he left nothing undone of all that the LORD commanded Moses” (Joshua 11:15).

In 1 Corinthians 11:3, Paul wrote “I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ [in His humanity] is God.”

These verses are a picture of God's table of organization. Notice how it works. The Lord commanded Moses, and Moses commanded Joshua. Then Joshua came under the authority of God and left nothing undone that the Lord had commanded Moses. As a pastor, if God says to me, “I want you to preach on the Great Commission,” I'm not going to leave it undone. Why? Because God's love provides the incentive to obey. We serve one another with a faith that works by love (Galatians 5:6).

The Premise for Authority: Unconditional Love

Delegated authority in the table of organiza-

tion is abused when people misunderstand the premise for authority: unconditional love. The watchmen in Song of Solomon 5:7 wounded the maiden who was seeking her Bridegroom. Because the maiden was failing, the watchmen hurt her, thinking she was not right with God. Then the keepers of the wall tore her veil, which means they made her failure public. Likewise, people may sometimes unintentionally wound a person who is really seeking the Lord because he does not *appear* to be right with God.

That is not love, because love covers the multitude of sins (1 Peter 4:8). Furthermore, because it separates close friends (Proverbs 17:9*b*), love never repeats a matter—except when it is between a counselor and the people involved, in the ministry of reconciliation, having the proper covering. That is perfectly in order under God’s table of organization.

“I have trouble with authority,” you say. But the real question is, what *kind* of authority do you have trouble with? Do you have trouble with the fact that God the Father *is* all and rules all and gave His Son to die for every sin ever committed—past, present, and future? Do you have a problem with that kind of love being your spiritual authority? When you come under

the authority of perfect love, you will find it is not grievous at all.

**Read The Bema Seat: Presented in Joy or Grief? by Pastor Stevens, Grace Publications, 1996.*

Chapter Two

HIDING IN ADAM, OR HID WITH CHRIST?

“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it” (Ephesians 5:25). Only when a husband loves as Christ loves can He exercise God’s authority in the home. Men, do you want authority? Then do it God’s way instead of harping on your wife to obey you. Any man who tells his wife, “You have to obey me. I’m the head!” has already been discredited in her eyes. Instead, when a man simply continues to love his wife in everything, she will find protection, provision, and power in obeying the divine authority of love.

Why don’t more people experience and express the authority of unconditional love? It is because they are hiding in Adam. To hide in Adam means to hide in all kinds of problems that have their origin in the Fall. Then, to get out of trouble, a man will try to counsel himself.

“How long shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily?” (Psalm 13:2). The Psalmist finally got sick of his soul counseling him. Try counseling yourself when you are hiding in Adam and see how you come out. You’ll probably come up with something like this: “I think the root of my trouble comes from what happened when I was eight. No, it was when I was twelve, too. Then it was something that happened at school when I was fourteen. And oh yes, my uncle did something to me when I was sixteen—” and on it goes. You can dig and dig, and all kinds of things will come out. But all you’re trying to do is unlock the depths of Adam—something you can never do. Instead, in identification with Christ, lock up Adam at Calvary! Put him in the grave, and don’t let him out.

A man who is hiding in Adam will never have any time for his wife. He will always be busy doing something. If a woman hiding in Adam has a husband who wants to serve God, she will try to prevent him from obeying God. “You can’t go there. You can’t do that. I have needs that *you* have to meet.”

Peter rebuked Jesus for His willingness to go to the cross. But Jesus addressed Satan who was

speaking through the disciple and then dealt with the real issue: Peter was hiding in Adam.

The Characteristics of Hiding in Adam

There are four characteristics of a person who hides in Adam. First, he lives in *self-preservation*. In Matthew 16:24, Jesus said, “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me”—a verse that has been so widely misrepresented. Jesus was not teaching self-denial. There is nothing in the Bible that teaches self-denial, because it can’t be done. Neither can we crucify ourselves. Try it sometime! You can’t do it.

To “deny yourself” means you don’t *preserve* yourself. It means that you accept daily what the cross has *already accomplished*. It is to receive resurrection power to take up a cross that no one is on.

Secondly, a person who is hiding in Adam lives in *self-defense mechanisms*. This goes back to the Fall of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden (see Genesis 3:8-13). Notice how they hid behind self-defense mechanisms when God came to question them:

“Adam, why did you eat of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil?” God asked.

“The woman *You* gave me, gave to me of the tree and I ate.” Adam defended himself by blaming God! Of course, Eve blamed the serpent.

“Why did you do it, Eve?”

“The serpent beguiled me, and I ate.”

Adam and Eve appeared to have good self-defense mechanisms. Most people who are caught in a sin will find a defense by placing blame on the devil or on how people have treated them. Instead of saying, “The devil made me do it,” just admit, “My old sin nature did it. I’m guilty. But Jesus Christ has redeemed me, and there is *no* condemnation.” (See Romans 7:20-8:1.) Then, humbly go to the Cross and recover.

The third characteristic of a person hiding in Adam is *self-absorption*. These men and women become totally absorbed with their own circumstances and with people. They become distracted and blinded to God’s viewpoint and they can’t hear the counsel that would set them free. Fourth, *self-occupation* is a characteristic that reveals a subjective disposition where I measure myself and how I am doing by my own understanding, rather than being occupied with Christ, who is the only standard to properly measure my life.

Hid with Christ in Resurrection Power

How can we be free from self-preservation, self-defense mechanisms, self-absorption, and self-occupation? By abiding in our hiding place in Christ (Colossians 3:3).

When we receive resurrection life, we automatically take up our cross. We are not *on* the cross, and neither is Christ. He took us to the grave to get rid of us! Crucified and now buried with Him, we receive resurrection power for a brand-new life (Acts 1:8).

God gives greater grace to the humble (James 4:6), and as we keep on receiving He imparts to us good things, blessings from God that are sanctified by the Word and prayer (1 Timothy 4:3-5). The key is to keep receiving life, love, and grace. We don't merit any of it—we *just keep receiving!* In our worst and best estate, we keep on receiving. Then, by grace, God works in us with His provision, and His life is worked out of us by our consent (see Philippians 2:12, 13).

Chapter Three

THE CHARACTER OF
DISCIPLESHIP

“A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another” (John 13:34, 35).

“Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know *the* [system of] truth, and *the* [system of] truth shall make you free” (John 8:31,32).

“Whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward” (Matthew 10:42).

Operating in the name of a disciple means to operate in the nature of precise categories of truth. Hebrews 6:10 says it another way: “God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour

of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister.”

Let me illustrate what being a disciple is all about. It is to see something that needs to be done and to do it, not grudgingly but with a spirit of joy and thanksgiving. It is being faithful in the small things and not despising them. Whether it is making phone calls to follow up on new believers, writing letters to encourage missionaries and others who may be weary from battle, or pulling weeds around the church property! Being a disciple is being about the Father’s business. It is hearing from God and having an anointing for everything we do, no matter what the endeavor.

They may be small things, but those who skillfully do these tasks with all of their heart are servants and disciples in the Body of Christ. Anything done in the name of a disciple will never, ever be forgotten. Think of what can be done in the name of a disciple. God never forgets your labor of love. Each thing you do in the name of a disciple is written down forever; and in heaven, a billion years from now, God will show you the day you made that decision to help out *in the name of a disciple*.

Leave Nothing Undone

“As the LORD commanded Moses his servant, so did Moses command Joshua, and so did Joshua; he left nothing undone of all the LORD commanded Moses” (Joshua 11:15).

If we love God, we will keep His commandments. His authority is love. Mercy means God doesn't give us what we do deserve. By His grace, He gives us what we do not deserve. We are motivated by love (2 Corinthians 5:14) and we are always under mercy and grace.

It is a beautiful thing when a Christian does not leave anything undone. He does everything that the table of organization teaches in submission to delegated authority, using rebound if he fails. Of course he recognizes his spiritual autonomy and is free in his believer-priesthood before God, but he doesn't leave a single thing undone. Remember, Joshua didn't leave anything undone of all that the Lord commanded Moses.

God says we are not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together, in Hebrews 10:25. Not leaving things undone means that we're in church when we're supposed to be, bringing others with us when we can. We don't leave

church attendance undone. We don't leave *soul winning* undone. When it comes to *tithing*, we don't leave it undone.

Don't leave the great commandment to *love* undone. This means that we cover, forgive, edify, build up, nourish, and cherish one another through the words of grace that build up our souls and give us an inheritance (Acts 20:32). "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another" (John 13:34). Husbands are to love their wives as Christ loved the Church; they are not to leave it undone.

Don't leave *prayer* and *meditation* undone. This is God's Word, and all Scripture is inspired (2 Timothy 3:16). We have been commanded to *live by every word of God* (Matthew 4:4), and that includes practicing rebound when we fail; that is part of living by every word—don't leave it undone.

Chapter Four

REVEALING THE IMAGE OF LOVE

“As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you,” Jesus said in John 15:9.

God’s nature always reveals redemption and a ministry of reconciliation. People who cannot forgive and forget have forgotten to receive the resurrection power of love. Imagine it. Jesus died for the one they are accusing while that one was in sin. Thank God, Jesus didn’t quit while we were still unredeemed sinners. He died for us, and He has made us perfect and unblameable in His sight!

How good it is to know that the Holy Spirit seals us forever (Ephesians 1:13,14; 4:30) and will never leave us—nor will Jesus (Hebrews 13:5*b*). But, in order to be Christ like, we must understand the principle in 2 Corinthians 4:10-12: We always bear about in our bodies the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus may

be manifested through us. We which are alive are always delivered unto the death of the Cross for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus may be manifested through our mortal body. Death works in us that life may work in others.

If I have a problem with the way things are being done, then I need to let death work in me *even if I am right*. I can't afford to get moody and then to withdraw into self-preservation and self-absorption.

"I'm going home to stay in my room today because things just aren't going right." That kind of statement reveals self-absorption, self-defense, self-preservation, and self-occupation. And I don't think anyone *really* wants be that way.

Don't excuse your flesh by saying, "I'm only human." That's just an excuse. Face the fact that you are a wicked sinner saved by grace like the rest of us. Then repent before God, isolate the sin, and go on.

Expressing the Heavenly

"And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. Howbeit that was *not* first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and

afterward that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly” (1 Corinthians 15:45-49).

We bear an image, and we manifest that image in everything we do, whether we are practicing a song, or going on outreach, we are manifesting an image—whether good or bad—to the angels and to the world. But more than that, we are manifesting an image to one another in the Body of Christ.

God wants me to know that I am hid with Christ in God. He wants me to know that it is “no longer I, but Christ who lives in me.” Then He wants me to manifest the life of Christ in my mortal body. And finally, He wants me to glorify Christ in everything I think, say, and do. That’s what it means to bear a heavenly image.

Second Corinthians 3:17-18 tells us how we begin to bear this heavenly image: “Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same *image* from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.”

When we walk in the Spirit, our conversation is in heaven (Philippians 3:20). Therefore, if someone attacks your flesh, know that it was for your sake so you could die in that area (2 Corinthians 4:15). Having that mind-set is much better than getting upset and struggling to preserve something about yourself.

As we reveal the image of love, then love becomes a spiritual authority in our lives—without us even having to usurp it. It becomes a spiritual authority on the basis of who Christ is and what He has done. It's an authority based on His mercy, grace, and love. No wonder that 1 Corinthians 13:7 says, "Charity [the greatest authority in the world] beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things." This kind of love may see people stumble, but it never fails. It will always be there to help us get up.

I have seen what happens to people who do not draw near to God; but eventually, when they do draw near, they become great Christians. How is that possible? They were loved unconditionally. They may have received a letter or a call from time to time just to love them up, even while they were out in the world. It may have been something as simple as, "Thinking of you,

love you, and God bless you with grace.” And, it is grace that draws people back, not the law.

Who can resist the authority of God’s grace? Sooner or later they come back, and eventually they are out soul-winning—all on their own initiative. They no longer want to leave things undone, because they are motivated by the love that died for them at Calvary.

CONCLUSION

The authority of Christ does not impute sin. It does not condemn. He doesn't use His authority to hurt us, wound us, make us react, or live in guilt. The authority of love has paid for our sins, and comes in to cleanse and purify us. Even if we fail seven times in a day, His love purifies us every time we rebound and get up again. God's authority teaches us how to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus' love.

Friends, this is what spiritual authority is all about. We can truly understand why 1 John 4:18 says that "there is no *fear* in love." That is how authority must operate in our lives—through the love, mercy, and grace of the New Covenant. It is a covenant sealed with the blood of Christ on Calvary.