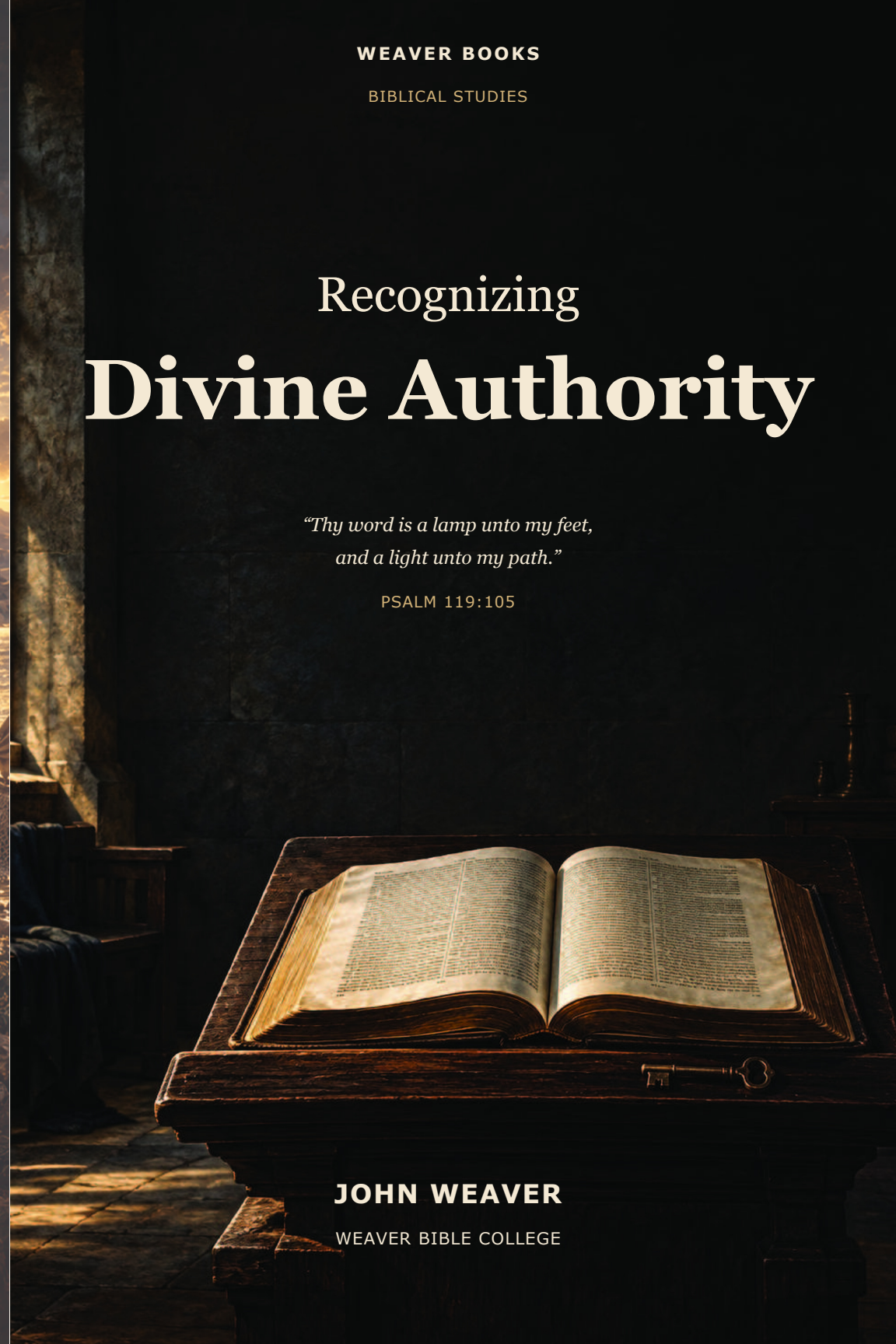
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Recognizing
Divine Authority

"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet,
and a light unto my path."

PSALM 119:105



JOHN WEAVER

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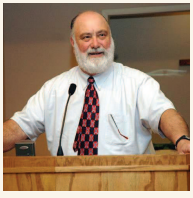
Thy word is true from the beginning: and every one of thy righteous judgments endureth for ever.

PSALM 119:160

Recognizing authority requires more than accepting an impressive claim. John Weaver examines the authority of God, the obligation to hear His Word, and the standards by which human conduct is tested. These messages connect discernment with humble obedience and ask readers to distinguish rightful authority from the demands of self-will.

"If you are not under authority and do not know how to take orders, it will be more difficult for you to recognize authority."

JOHN WEAVER



John Weaver

John Weaver's sermons form the teaching collection presented by Weaver Bible College. This volume gathers his teaching from that collection.

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CHAPTER 1

Recognizing Divine Authority

Part One

SCRIPTURE READING - Matthew 8:5-13; Luke 7:1-7 (KJV)

Matthew 8 verse 5: "And when Jesus was entered into Capernaum, there came unto him a centurion, beseeching him, and saying, Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented. And Jesus saith unto him, I will come and heal him. The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof, but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed. For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me. And I say to this man, Go, and he goeth, and to another, come, and he cometh. And to my servant do this and he doeth it. When Jesus heard it, he marveled and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel."

"And I say unto you that many shall come from the east and west and shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of God, in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. And Jesus said unto the

centurion, Go thy way as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee."

"And his servant was healed the same hour."

Now, if you would turn to Luke chapter 7, you have essentially the same story with one exception. Luke chapter 7, beginning with verse 1.

"Now, when he had ended all his sayings in the audience of the people, he entered into Capernaum and a certain centurion's servant, who was dear unto him, was sick and ready to die. And when he heard of Jesus, he sent unto him the elders of the Jews, beseeching him that he would come and heal his servant. And when they came to Jesus, they besought him instantly, saying that he was worthy for whom he should do this."

"For he loveth our nation and built us a synagogue. Then Jesus went with them, and when he was now not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to him, saying unto him, Lord, trouble not thyself, for I am not worthy that thou shouldest enter under my roof. Wherefore, neither thought I myself worthy to come unto thee, but say the word, and my servant shall be healed."

Introduction to Authority

Authority is an exceedingly important subject. It may not sound very interesting, yet the truth is that the entire world either turns upon an understanding or upon a perception of authority. I say either an understanding or a perception because those are two totally different concepts. One may truly understand and grasp the significance of authority, or one may simply perceive authority and not really understand it at all.

For instance, when you see a man standing in a deputy's uniform with a badge and a pistol on his side, you perceive authority. But that does not mean that you understand authority. It does not mean that you recognize or understand his source of authority, nor does it mean that you recognize and understand his limitations on authority. So there is a difference, then, between perception and understanding.

We must understand also this fact: one's perceptions of authority, or anything else, may indeed be faulty. They may be wrong, illusory, or futile, but you can still have a perception. I find it very interesting in counseling. When I talk to a husband and wife, they tell two different stories, but they're not lying. What are they doing? They are relaying their perception or their interpretation of the facts. And may I tell you that a perception or an interpretation of a fact is totally different from the fact itself. So you may perceive authority, and it may be faulty, illusory, and futile. That does not necessarily mean that just because you perceive something, it is right.

Do you understand that it is absolutely impossible to live a single day without confronting the issue of authority? There is God's sovereign authority. There is personal authority, family authority, church authority, city and county authority, state authority, federal authority, and all the branches that stem from these different systems. Authority pervades our lives, and we're forced to deal with these issues on a daily basis. We cannot live, we cannot move, nor can we exist without authority.

A simple truth that we must understand at the very outset is this: there is indeed a lawful, legitimate authority, and on the other hand, there is an unlawful and illegitimate authority. The two are not necessarily agreeable in any stretch of the imagination. Lawful authority is really and truly for our freedom and our independence. Illegitimate and unlawful authority is for our enslavement and our own demise.

I have a friend who has some T-shirts printed. Across the front, in big bold letters, are the words, “Question authority.” Now, where in the world would anyone have T-shirts printed with “Question authority” written across the front? The answer is simply that not all authority is lawful and legitimate. If there is no lawful and legitimate authority, then you are not bound to obey usurped authority that is being dictatorially grasped and used against you.

Let me go back to my initial statement: there is a difference between understanding authority and the perception of authority. For instance, I may walk through this door wearing a deputy sheriff’s uniform, with a badge on my chest and a pistol on my hip. People who know me would say, “He’s not an officer. He’s impersonating an

officer.” People who do not know me would say, “Well, there’s a deputy sheriff.”

There is a difference between perception and understanding and grasping. Wearing a deputy sheriff’s uniform, even with a pistol and badge, does not mean that I have a deputy sheriff’s authority. I would simply be impersonating an officer. Likewise, just because someone has authority in one area does not mean that he has authority in another. Just because some bureaucrat has a little authority here does not mean that he has the right to interfere in your life elsewhere, or in areas where he has absolutely no authority whatsoever.

I am telling you this as a foundation, to get you thinking about what I am going to share with you next time, Lord willing. When this centurion came to Christ, he recognized authority. There was something about Jesus Christ. One of our problems in this country, and I see it happening every day, is that we are too accustomed to being sheeple.

That's a combination of sheep and people. We are so accustomed to being told where to stand and where to go. It is like the old joke about the men who died and went to heaven. Over one doorway was a sign: "Entrance for henpecked husbands only." Over another was a sign: "Entrance for non-henpecked husbands." One man stood in the first line. When asked what he was doing there, he replied, "Well, my wife told me to come over here."

That is what I am saying. We are used to being told what to do, where to stand in line, and where to go. It never dawns on us to ask, "Wait a minute, what authority does someone have to tell me to stand in this line? What authority does someone have to tell me not to do this, or that I can do this?" When we truly begin to question authority and discern that many people ordering our lives around do not have the authority to do so, it begins to free us. It also begins to upset them, because we are no longer their dupes and have the impudence to question their authority and call it to task.

They do not want to answer embarrassing questions that expose their lack of real authority. Lawful, biblical authority is designed for our freedom, independence, and well-being. Usurped, unlawful, and

illegitimate authority is tyrannical and is used for our enslavement and destruction.

The Centurion's Story and Apparent Contradiction

I read two passages, one from Matthew chapter 8 and the other from Luke chapter 7. These passages cover the same miracle. The difference is this: in Matthew chapter 8, the Bible tells us that the centurion himself came to Christ and asked Him to come and heal his servant. In Luke chapter 7, the Bible says that he sent the elders of the Jews; he did not go himself. Someone reading these two passages will say, "There's a contradiction in the Bible."

Matthew 8 says the centurion came to Christ, while Luke chapter 7 says he sent the elders of the Jews. The discrepancy between these passages is quickly cleared up when you understand that whatever is done in your name, with your consent and by your authority, is exactly the same as your doing it yourself. According to Luke chapter 7, the centurion sent the elders of the Jews; when Matthew chapter 8 says that he came himself, it is the same principle, because he sent those Jews in his name, with his consent and by his authority.

Look at another illustration in John chapter 19. You remember how Jesus Christ stood before Pilate three times and Pilate said, "I find no fault in him." The people cried out, "Let him be crucified, let him be crucified." John 19:1 says, "Then Pilate therefore took Jesus and scourged him." The passage continues, "And the soldiers platted a crown of thorns and put it on his head, and they put on him the purple robe."

Who beat Christ with the cat-of-nine-tails, hit him with the rod, and put the crown of thorns on his head? The soldiers. Yet John 19:1 says, "Pilate took him and scourged him." Pilate never laid a hand on Him. How can Pilate be charged with scourging Christ? What was done by the soldiers was done in his name, by his consent, and with his authority. Therefore God charges it to Pilate, although Pilate never lifted a finger against Christ.

John chapter 4 gives the same truth: "When therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John, (though Jesus himself baptized not, but

his disciples)." How can it be said that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John when Christ never baptized anybody? Because the baptism was done in his name, with his consent and by his authority. It was just the same as if Christ baptized. Therefore, when the elders were sent in Luke chapter 7 by the centurion's consent and with his authority, it was the same as the centurion himself coming. That is how Matthew records it in Matthew chapter 8.

I want you to understand that I am drawing from both of these passages in order to communicate the truth concerning divine authority. Before I get to the heart of the matter, which will be in the second message, I must deal with the person of the centurion himself, because he is truly a unique individual. When you see his character and his faith, I think you will be in a position to recognize and better understand his comprehension of our Lord's divine authority.

The Place of the Miracle: Capernaum

In Luke chapter seven, verse one, we find first of all the place of the miracle. The Bible says that Jesus entered into Capernaum. What is the place of the miracle? It was Capernaum. It is certainly true that our Lord lived in Capernaum for a period of time. In fact, Matthew 4:13 tells us, "And leaving Nazareth, where he grew up, he came and dwelt in Capernaum which is upon the sea coast in the borders of Zabulon and Naphtali." So Christ did for a while live in Capernaum. Yet Capernaum is not known for Christ living there. Capernaum is known in Scripture mainly for its rejection of Jesus Christ and its rejection of His teachings. The miracles performed in Capernaum did not turn the hearts of the people in general.

Consequently, on two separate occasions, our Lord condemned Capernaum, showing that it was known for its rejection of Christ and His Word. In Matthew 11:23-24, our Lord says, "And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shall be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works which had been done in thee had been done in Sodom, it would have remained unto this day. But I say unto you that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for thee." God was condemning and cursing

Capernaum because of all the mighty works that He had done there. The people in general did not repent.

They did not receive Christ, nor did they receive His teachings. In Luke 10:15, our Lord again says, "And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted to heaven, shall be thrust down to hell."

The reason I emphasize this point is to demonstrate that even in the most difficult, wicked, and Christ-rejecting cities, Christ still has some sheep. There may not be many, but there are some. This centurion was found in a city that hated Christ and hated His Word. He was not found in a city that was merely indifferent, but in one that hated Christ and hated His Word. Corinth was another wicked, vile city. Even the mighty Apostle Paul was fearful when he went there to preach. Acts 18:8-10 says, "And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed in the Lord with all his house. And many of the Corinthians hearing believed and were baptized." Then the Lord spoke to Paul in the night by a vision: "Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city."

Corinth was so wicked and vile that even the mighty apostle Paul was afraid to preach there. God had to tell Paul, “Do not be afraid. I’m going to protect you. No one’s going to harm you. You preach in this city, for I’ve got much people here.” Even in the most wicked and vile cities, our Lord has some sheep.

There is another thought along this line: just because there are wicked people in wicked cities, that does not keep Christ from performing His work. Do you remember what our Lord said in Luke chapter 19, verse 10? “For the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.” He has come to seek His own and save His own, and He shall find them wherever they are. In John 10, verse 27, our Lord said, “My sheep hear my voice, and they follow me.” It does not matter where they are. When He speaks, they follow Him.

There is no amount of worldliness or wickedness that can hinder Christ or stop Christ from calling His own. To me, that is an exceedingly encouraging truth. You remember what He was named? The angel told Joseph and Mary in Matthew 1, verse 21, “Thou shalt call his name Jesus, Yahashua. Savior. Jehovah saves. Thou shalt call

His name Jesus. Why? For He shall save His people from their sins." No amount of wickedness or worldliness can stop Jesus Christ. Nothing can thwart Him, hinder Him, or stop Him from saving His people.

Isaiah 53 says, "He shall see the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied." The place of this miracle was Capernaum, one of the most wicked, vile, Christ-rejecting cities alive at the time of Christ.

The Person of the Centurion: A Roman Soldier

Notice secondly the person who requested this miracle in Luke chapter 7. Luke 7, verse 2, says, "And a certain centurion's servant, who was dear unto him, was sick and ready to die. And when he heard of Jesus, he sent unto the elders of the Jews, beseeching him that he would come and heal his servant." We are told in Matthew 8 and Luke chapter 7 that it was a certain centurion.

A centurion is a title given to one who was a member of the Roman legion. He was called a centurion because he had a hundred men under him. In other words, he was an officer in the Roman army. Since he was a centurion, he was a soldier—not only a soldier, but a Roman soldier. Roman soldiers were not necessarily given to faith and piety, nor were they given to compassion. Historically, these men were known for their violence, insurrection, and abuse of civilians. They were hardened men who killed mercilessly.

Turn in your Bibles to Luke chapter three. John the Baptist had come preaching repentance. He not only preached repentance; he told the people to bring forth fruits evidencing repentance—that is, fruits manifesting repentance. Suppose, for illustration, that Don is a drunkard. If Don said, "I repent of my drunkenness," and repentance means to change your mind, which means a change of conduct, but you saw him walking down the street the next day drunk, what would you know? He never repented. But if you saw him living a sober, righteous life for the next twenty years, what would you know? He truly repented.

John therefore told the people that they not only had to repent, but had to bring forth fruits evidencing their repentance. In verse 10, "And the people asked him, saying, What shall we do?" Or, what

shall we do to evidence our repentance? “And he answered and said unto them, He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none. And he that hath meat, let him do likewise.” The main sin of the people in general was their covetousness and selfishness.

Then, in verse 12, the publicans came to be baptized and said to him, “Master, what shall we do?” That is, what shall we do to evidence that our repentance is real? “And he said to them, Exact no more than that which is appointed you.” The publicans, the tax collectors, were notorious thieves. Therefore, if they wanted to demonstrate their repentance, they were to be honest.

John the Baptist gave different answers to different people. He gave one answer to the people, another to the publicans, and now, in verse 13 or verse 14, we read: “And the soldiers likewise demanded him, saying, And what shall we do?” That is, to demonstrate our repentance. “And he said to them, Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely and be content with your wages.”

What were the soldiers known for? They were known for their violence, their false accusations, and their insurrection. In other words, they did not get what they wanted: “We are the ones with the power. We’ve got the AK-47s. We’ll get it or else.”

Interestingly enough, John the Baptist gave three different answers to three different groups. What is he teaching us? He is teaching us that our repentance will first and foremost manifest itself in the areas of our most peculiar, particular, and common sins. He looked at these soldiers and said, “Look, you do violence to no man, you neither accuse any falsely, and you be content with your wages.” It is just that simple.

These Roman soldiers were usually extremely hard men. One of the other aspects of a Roman soldier that was so distasteful to civilians was the fact that a Roman soldier could catch a civilian and demand that he carry all of his weapons and goods for one mile. He would be impressed, and it was very onerous to the civilians. Here you are going to the market, and you have to be back home by a certain time, when you run into a Roman soldier who says, “Hey, you, come over here. You carry my luggage for me for a mile.”

Our Lord took care of that in Matthew chapter 5 and verse 41: “And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain.” In other words, our Lord was saying, do not be bitter and vindictive. Make sure your heart is pure and clean, even if you have to go two miles. Although this is onerous and distasteful, you do not become bitter and resentful in and of yourself.

The civilians, and especially the Jews, hated the Roman soldiers, and the Roman soldiers hated the Jews. There were exceptions, but generally speaking, the pervasive attitude in the civilian population at that time was one of extreme hatred. Yet, when you come to Matthew 8 and Luke chapter 7, you find a Roman soldier who is so unique, it is unbelievable. First of all, notice his faith.

The Centurion's Faith

The amazing thing about this centurion was that he was indeed the exception to the rule. He was a man of faith, and he actually loved the people over whom he ruled. His faith was very particular in one respect. Luke 7:3 says concerning this centurion, “And when he heard of Jesus, he sent unto him the elders of the Jews, beseeching him that he would come and heal his servant.” Note what it says: “And when he heard of Jesus.” This centurion had never met Him, had never seen Him, and had never seen any of the miracles done by Him. He had only heard of Jesus. Perhaps he had heard about our Lord’s healing the nobleman’s son in John chapter four.

“So Jesus came again into Cana of Galilee, where he made the water wine, and there was a certain nobleman whose son was sick.” Where? “At Capernaum. And when he heard that Jesus was come out of Judea into Galilee, he went up to him and besought him that he would come down and heal his son, for he was at the point of death. Then said Jesus unto him, Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe. The nobleman saith unto him, Sir, come down, ere my child die. Jesus said unto him, Go thy way, thy son liveth. And the man believed the word that Jesus had spoken unto him, and he went his way. And as he was now going down, his servants met him, and told him, saying, Thy son liveth.”

“Then inquired he of them the hour when he began to amend. And they said unto him, Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him.

So the father knew that it was at the same hour in which Jesus said unto him, Thy son liveth, and himself believed, and his whole house." This miracle was also done in Capernaum. Maybe this is where he had heard of Jesus. I don't know. The Bible simply says that he had heard of Jesus. At any rate, when he heard of Him, he believed in Him.

The centurion was no doubting Thomas. Do you remember when Jesus appeared to His disciples and told them, "Be not afraid, it is I myself"? Thomas was not with the disciples that first time. When the disciples told Thomas, "We have seen the Lord," in John 20:25, Thomas said, "Except I see the print of the nails in his hands and put my finger in the print of the nails and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe."

The next time Christ appeared to the disciples, Thomas was there. Our Lord said, "Thomas, be not faithless, but believing, reach hither and put your fingers in the holes and take your hand and thrust it in my side and see that it is I myself." Did Thomas ever reach out and do it? No, he just fell on the floor and said, "My Lord and my God." Our Lord told him, "Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed."

"Blessed are they which have not seen and yet believed." Thomas saw Jesus and believed, but blessed are those who have not seen Him and yet have believed. The centurion had not seen Jesus, yet he believed. His faith was extraordinary. In Luke 7:9, "When Jesus heard these things, he marveled at him and turned him about and said to the people that follow him, I say to you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel." Even Christ Himself pronounced the centurion's faith a great faith.

Only twice in the entire New Testament does the Bible say that Christ marveled. The first time the Bible says that Christ marveled is in Mark 6:6.

There he is, marveling at the unbelief of the Nazarites. The people of Nazareth did not believe on him, and he marveled at their unbelief. The only other time the Bible tells us that Christ marveled is here, with this centurion, marveling at the great faith of a Roman

soldier who was ostensibly outside of Israel. Our Lord says this man has a great faith.

The Centurion's Generosity and Testimony

Notice not only his faith, but also his generosity and his testimony. Look in verse five. Here is what these Jewish elders tell Christ. In fact, let us read verse four: “And when they came to Jesus, they besought him instantly, saying that he was worthy for whom he should do this, for he loveth our nation and built us a synagogue.”

I have news for you, folks: unbelievably, this centurion had somehow come to an understanding of God’s law in some respect. I say unbelievably because you have to remember that the law had been perverted by the Pharisees. Yet somehow, some way, this centurion had come to grasp the law of God, that the law of God was divine and should be communicated. Therefore, he built them a synagogue. Initially, synagogues were for the teaching and instruction of God’s law.

The fact that he built a synagogue was no doubt a commendation given to him by the Jews for his piety, his love of the nation that was universally hated, his zeal for the law, and his reverence for God. By building a synagogue, he showed plainly that he favored the doctrine of God’s law.

Now I want to point out several eye-opening truths in this passage. This centurion sent the elders of the Jews. I do not have to tell you that the Jews as a whole hated and rejected Christ. What does the Bible say? “He came unto his own, his own received him not.” They did not want him and had no use for him.

The amazing thing is that these Jews not only condemn themselves, but at the same time demonstrate astonishing stupidity by admitting and acknowledging that a Roman soldier possesses the grace of God, which they despise and reject. Think this through: here is a Roman soldier who has rule over these Jews, believes in Christ, and sends the elders who hate Christ and do not believe in him. These elders now beseech Christ to have grace upon this Roman soldier.

How in the world can you beg for grace for someone else when you will not even beg for grace for yourself? If Jesus Christ is indeed the Son of God—and He is—and the dispenser of God's sovereign grace—and He is—then common sense tells you that if I want God to bless this man through Jesus Christ, I want Him to bless me through Jesus Christ. If God can do that for that man, certainly God can do that for me. How can these Jews beseech Christ to bless a Roman soldier when they refused to beseech Christ to bless them?

Although this centurion had marvelous faith and a good testimony, the Jews showed their ignorance of God's law by saying, in verse four, "And when they came to Jesus, they besought him instantly saying that he was worthy for whom he should do this for he loved our nation and built us a synagogue." What are they saying? You can earn the grace and mercy of God. He is worthy; look what he has done. He loves us. He built a synagogue. How do you expect to barter and bargain with God? "Now, God, he has done this for you," as though God were obligated to do this for him.

You cannot bargain with God, impress God, indebt God, or barter with God. You cannot say, "I'll do this for you, Lord, if you'll do this for me." If you want to read about bartering with God, read Matthew 20, verses 1 through 16. When Christ went to call men into His vineyard, they said, "We want a penny a day." They went to work at six o'clock in the morning. Our Lord went out at the ten o'clock hour, the twelve o'clock hour, the three o'clock hour, and the four o'clock hour, telling men, "Go into my kingdom and work. And whatsoever is right, I'll give to you." When the day ended, those who had worked just one hour received a penny, just as He gave to everyone.

There is an interesting verse in that passage. Those who had bartered and bargained with God supposed that they would receive more. They complained, "Lord, you've made these people equal to us who have borne the burden and the heat of the day. We worked for twelve hours for a penny, and these folks have just worked one hour, and You've given them a penny." You know what our Lord said?

His Compassion

"Can I not do as I will with mine own? Is your eye evil because I'm good? Did you not agree with me for a penny? I've done thee no

wrong. Go thy way." Huh? You want to bargain with God? I want to tell you something: you're going to come out on the short end of the stick. I'd just rather say, "Lord, bless me." I told you, I'm kind of like the fellow who's looking for a job, and the man says, "I'll hire you." He said, "Well, how much are you going to pay me?" He said, "I'll pay you what you're worth." He said, "Uh-uh, I can't live that cheap."

I want God to give me what I'm worth. I want God to give me what Christ is worth. I can't live on what I deserve, I can assure you. But you can't bargain with God. And when you do, you lose. These Jews are showing their absolute ignorance of God's law and of God's worth by saying, "He's worthy. Look what He's done."

The Centurion's Compassion and Humility

Notice thirdly, his compassion. In Luke seven and verse two, not just his faith and his generosity in his testimony, but look at this: "And a certain centurion's servant, who was dear unto him, was sick and ready to die."

All I could say when I read this is, stand in awe. Here is a Roman soldier, a commander, who is compassionate and caring. You think our warfare is brutal, and it is, but you've never seen brutality as in Roman warfare. These men were so hardened. They dealt death on every hand and never thought one second about it.

And yet here the Bible says this centurion had a servant, a slave, for whom he was concerned. The word servant there is doulos in the Greek, which literally means slave. So a certain centurion's slave, who was dear unto him, was ready to die.

Now go back to Matthew chapter eight and look in verse six. Luke seven tells us this servant was indeed a slave. Matthew eight says, "And saying, the centurion came and said, Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented." The word servant there is not doulos; it is a different Greek word, pais. Are you listening? It literally means "my boy." So he says, "Lord, my boy lieth at home sick of the palsy."

I am not saying that this was his physical son. I do not believe it was, but the Bible does say in Luke 7:2 that this slave was very dear unto him. Evidently, the slave was a young man. This passage

teaches us about the love, affection, and closeness that can exist between a master and a slave. Proverbs 29:21 states, “He that delicately bringeth up his servant or a slave from a child shall have him become his son at length.”

This really hit me. During the war of northern aggression, many black slaves gave their lives for their white masters, and many white masters gave their lives for their black slaves.

Even an adult black male slave was usually called a boy. That is what they were called when I was a child. The term boy was not a term of reproach or racial discrimination; it was a term of affection and closeness. It denoted a familial relation. When a white man called his black slave his boy, he was not cutting the black man down. He was saying, “He is part of my family. I count him as my child.”

Even today, I have nearly grown grandsons, seventeen and fifteen years old, and I call them my boys. They are not boys, but the term denotes a familial relation and is affectionate. My mother, who is eighty-five, still refers to me as her boy, though I am sixty-one. It is a term of affection.

Here was a compassionate Roman soldier concerned about his boy, who was a slave. This boy was about to die. He was concerned for his life. Matthew 8:6 tells us that the boy was grievously afflicted and tormented with a palsy. Evidently, the young man was bedridden with paralysis, and the paralysis was attacking his respiratory system. At certain times he would probably stop breathing and come within seconds of death. The centurion, as a loving master, wanted his boy healed. He did not want to lose the boy whom he loved.

Fourthly, notice his humility. You must understand something about this man in order to recognize how he recognized divine authority. Notice his humility.

The Jew said, "He is worthy for whom Christ should do this." But what did the centurion say? "I'm unworthy. Don't even bother to come under the roof of my house. I'm not even worthy that you enter into my house." On the one hand, the Jew says that he is worthy; on the other hand, the centurion says, "I am unworthy." True humility

recognizes its own unworthiness, no matter what is accomplished or done.

This man built a synagogue, spent thousands of dollars, loved the people, and probably gave generously. He did not go around strutting like that Pharisee in Luke 18: "Lord, I thank Thee that I'm not as other men. Lord, I do this and I do that." He did not say, "Lord, look what I've done." He said, "Lord, it doesn't matter what I have done. I am still unworthy." Building churches, caring for the sick, caring for the needy, and a host of other things cannot make us worthy of the grace and mercy of God. This Roman soldier, this centurion, had a better understanding of the grace and mercy of God than did the elders and rulers of the Jews.

Humility is when we take our place as the creature before the Creator, as a servant before the Master, as the son before the father, and as a slave before his Lord. Humility is when we truly understand who we are and know our place. Our place is not on the throne issuing demands. Our place is at the foot of the throne begging for mercy. That's our place. The centurion realized that all of his accomplishments merited him absolutely nothing. Everything he had done meant nothing as far as his standing before God. "I am unworthy."

His attitude was the same as the Apostle Paul's. When Paul realized the worthlessness of his own works and self-righteousness, he said, "Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, my Lord: for whom I suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." The mighty Apostle Paul, who was a Hebrew of the Hebrews, a Pharisee of the Pharisees, circumcised the eighth day, and of the tribe of Benjamin, said, "I am nothing and everything that I've done is nothing but dung."

I want nothing; I have no standing or merits. I can claim only Jesus Christ’s righteousness, my faith. That is exactly what this centurion understood.

How could this centurion come to Christ and say, “Lord, I'm not worthy for you to come under the roof of my house,” and, “Lord, you don't even have to. You just speak the word. It'll be taken care of”? Why is it that in John 4 the nobleman said, “Sir, come down ere my child die”? The nobleman wanted the Lord there, touching his child. He said, “Lord, I want you there. I want you touching him.” The centurion said, “Lord, you don't have to come to my house. You just speak the word.” How could that man have such faith? What did he recognize and what did he see that the average Christian never sees and never understands?

Applications and Closing

The first application is this: it is not human worthiness that Christ recognizes and rewards, but faith in His person. There are a couple of applications here, and this should quench your appetite to get you thinking about this centurion.

Those Jews said, “Oh Lord, He loved our nation. He built for us a synagogue.” The Lord was not impressed. He never even mentioned the synagogue or His compassion toward the people. You know what Christ said? “I have not found so great a faith. No, not in Israel.” What impressed Christ was not his works, but his faith. If you want to impress Christ, it is not your good deeds, your merits, or your works; it is faith in His person.

There is a biblical principle here: it is scriptural for others to announce your good deeds, but not you yourself. Pride fills the hearts of Christians so many times, and we have to tell everybody all the good works that we have done. Proverbs 20:6 says, “Most men will proclaim everyone his own goodness, but a faithful man who can find.” What do most men do? They proclaim their own goodness. They will tell you how good they are and what all they have done. But then God says, “A faithful man who can find.”

Proverbs 27:2 says, “Let another man praise thee and not thine own mouth, a stranger not thine own lips.” Let another man praise you. What would you think of Dr. Holmes if he went around everywhere saying, “I am the best veterinarian in the state of Georgia,” and told everybody that? Pretty soon you would begin to think, “Well, he is a proud, arrogant rascal,” would you not?

Suppose, on the other hand, that we, who are his clients, go around telling everybody, “You'll take your animal to Dr. Holmes. He's the best veterinarian in the state of Georgia.” Is there a difference? You better believe it. Scripture says, “Let another man praise thee, and not thine own mouth; a stranger, and not thine own lips.” It is scriptural for others to praise and announce our good deeds and good work, but it is not for us ourselves. When we begin to do it, it is boasting, bragging, and pride. Lord knows we have enough of that as it is.

True, genuine faith leads to action. It is not inactive. People say, “I just believe the Lord is going to heal me, so I’m going to sit here and wait on the Lord to heal me.” I know that all healing is of the Lord. If God does not heal us either immediately, directly, or mediately, through means, we will not be healed. But that centurion did not sit at home believing that God would somehow send Christ to his door and miraculously heal his servant. He went out looking for Him.

Real faith is active. It moves us to seek Christ, to seek His blessings, and to seek His blessing upon the means He has ordained. Real faith does not allow us to sit around inactive, waiting on God to do everything for us. If we have faith, we will be active, seek Christ, search out His divine means, and seek His blessing upon those means.

True, genuine love and compassion are always demonstrated and demonstrable. What did those elders say? Did they come to Christ and say, “We know he loves us because he told us so”? No. “He loveth our nation,” and what? “He hath built us a synagogue.”

Even God Himself did not merely say that He loves us. Certainly, He has said that repeatedly, but He demonstrated it. Look in 1 John 3 and verse 16: “Hereby perceive we.”

The word perceive means to understand, to comprehend, to lay hold on. “Hereby perceive we, understand we. Hereby comprehend we the love of God.” Why? “Because He laid down His life for us.” He did not just tell us He loved us; He demonstrated it. He laid down His life for us. “And we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.” “But whoso hath this world's goods, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up the bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth

the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth." True love is always demonstrable. True compassion is always demonstrable.

If I told my wife every day that I loved her, but I never kissed her, held her, wanted to be around her, or took her anywhere, it would not take her long to think, "I know he says he loves me, but why doesn't he demonstrate it?" If we say we love Christ, we will demonstrate it by obedience. If we say we love the brethren, we will demonstrate it by serving and ministering to them. True love and true compassion are always demonstrable. We know that He loved us. Why? Because He laid down His life for us.

This centurion, at whom Jesus Christ marveled for his great faith, recognized something that most Christians never recognize. Lord willing, we will cover that next time.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we ask that You help, enable, and empower us to recognize Your divine authority. Help us also to question authority, to make sure there is a lawful, legitimate authority—the authority to which we must be in submission. But grant us grace not to submit to that which is unlawful, illegitimate, and unbiblical, and become slaves, because we are the Lord's free men and are to stand fast in the liberty wherewith You have made us free. Give us grace to serve You acceptably with reverence and godly fear. Help us to live for You, protect us, provide for us, and in Your good providence direct our paths. In Christ's name we pray, Amen.

CHAPTER 2

Recognizing Divine Authority

Part Two

Introduction and Review

Our text is Matthew 8 and Luke 7, and we are on part two of recognizing divine authority. In Matthew 8, beginning with verse 5:

"And when Jesus was entered into Capernaum, there came unto him a centurion beseeching him and saying, Lord, my servant lieth at home, sick of the palsy, grievously tormented. Jesus said unto him, I will come and heal him. The centurion answered and said, Lord, I'm not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof, but speak the word only and my servant shall be healed. For I'm a man under authority, having soldiers under me. Now I say to this man, go, and he goeth; and to another, come, and he cometh; and to my servant, do this, and he doeth it. When Jesus heard it, he marveled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. And I say unto you, that many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness, and there shall be

weeping and gnashing of teeth. And Jesus said unto the centurion, Go thy way; as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee."

And his servant was healed the same hour.

The entire world turns upon authority, either the perception of authority or an understanding of authority. There can be a great distance and a great vast difference between a perception of authority and understanding authority. Authority may be perceived and not necessarily be real and genuine, but once you understand authority—what is real, what is genuine, and its limitations—there is indeed a vast difference.

I told you about my friend who had the T-shirts made, with the only thing written across the front simply, "Question Authority." That is certainly true, because most authority today, a lot of it, is very illegitimate as well. Just because someone has authority in one area does not necessarily mean that it has authority in the other area as well.

In Matthew chapter 8, the Bible says the centurion came to Christ. In Luke chapter 7, the Bible says he sent the elders to Christ. There is no contradiction between those two things, because whatever is done in your name, with your consent and by your authority, is the same as you doing it.

We see this in the account of Pilate. The Bible says Pilate scourged Jesus, yet Pilate never lifted his hand. He gave the order, and it was the soldiers who scourged our Lord. Nevertheless, it is attributed to Pilate as if he had done it himself, because it was done by his authority and in his name.

Likewise, the Bible tells us in John chapter 4 that Jesus Christ made and baptized more disciples than John. Then verse 2 says, "Though Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples." How is it that Jesus is attributed with baptizing all of these people when He did not baptize anyone? His disciples were doing it in His name, with His consent and under His authority. There is really no difference between these passages; once they are brought together, we understand that they teach the same truth.

The Place and Person of the Miracle

The place of this miracle was Capernaum. Capernaum had always been a place under the curse of God, and our Lord said, “Woe unto thee, Capernaum! thou art exalted unto heaven, for thou shalt be brought down to hell.” Yet no matter how wicked the city, town, or area, God always has some elect there. When Paul went to Corinth, God told him, “Be not afraid, hold not thy peace: for I have much people in this city.”

The person who requested this miracle was a Roman soldier, a centurion with a minimum of one hundred men under him. He had extraordinary faith, and our Lord Himself testified to it: “He had not found so great a faith, no, not in Israel.” He was also marked by generosity and testimony.

For in Luke chapter 7, verse 5, those Jews said, “He loveth our nation, and he builded us a synagogue.” The synagogue was there for the teaching and instruction of the law. We also looked at his compassion, because he had a servant who was sick. It is absolutely marvelous to find a Roman soldier who would have compassion at all, because these men were usually so hardened by death and destruction.

The Centurion's Compassion and Humility

In Luke chapter 7 and verse 2, the centurion says, “My servant lieth at home sick.” The Greek word there is doulos, which literally means, “My slave lieth at home sick.” Here was a man concerned for his slave. But in Matthew 8 and verse 6, when the centurion says, “My servant,” it is actually hapis, translated, “My boy.” “My boy lieth at home sick.” That does not necessarily mean this slave was his physical son, but it does indicate that he was a younger slave with a dear relationship to his master. Here was a slave and a master who understood one another, with a loving, close relationship between them. The term boy is an affectionate term. That is why the Bible says in Proverbs 29 and verse 21, “He that delicately bringeth up his servant from a child will at length have him to become his son.”

In other words, he will give him an inheritance, so to speak. Historically, this is where the word boy came from in servant-master

relationships. It was not a term of discrimination. Many blacks, even older blacks who were adults, were called boys—not as a term of discrimination, belittling, or putting them down, but as a term of affection.

That is exactly what he said: "It's my boy who's sick." So we see his compassion, and then his humility. Christ said, "I'll come and heal him," and he replied, "No, no, no. I'm not worthy that thou shouldest enter under the roof of my house." We need to understand authority. If we understand authority, then we will understand the impact and greatness of this centurion's faith.

Christ's Divine Authority in Teaching

The core issue is recognizing divine authority. Our Lord taught as no other man has ever taught, and He preached as no other man has ever preached. The Bible says that He taught them as one who had authority. Why did our Lord teach and preach as no other man?

There are two answers. First, He was endued with the fullness of the Holy Spirit. The Bible says in John 3:34, "For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him." When Jesus Christ was baptized, John testified that he saw the Holy Spirit descending as a dove upon Christ. Christ, then, was endued with the absolute and total fullness of the Holy Spirit.

The second reason Christ taught as no other man ever taught was the authority which He possessed. Matthew 7:29 says that He taught them with authority. Jesus Christ did not have to guess at what the Scripture meant. He did not have to make an hypothesis, interpret, or speculate. He knew what the Scripture meant, for He wrote the Scriptures. He not only wrote the Scriptures; He is the living Word of God. Very clearly, then, He had absolute and total authority.

In Luke 4:36, we read, "And they were all amazed, and spake among themselves, saying, What a word is this! Now listen, for with what authority and power commandeth he the unclean spirits, and they come out." Of course He had authority and power. Why should not our Lord preach and teach differently? Why should He not preach and teach with authority and power? He had the fullness of

the Holy Spirit, and He had divine authority. He knew the Word of God. He inspired it. He authored it. He is the living Word.

The Written and Living Word

There are three Scriptures that you need to understand in light of this. The first one is 2 Timothy 3, verse 16: “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God.” The word inspiration is the Greek word Theopneustos, which literally means God exhaled or God breathed. All Scripture is God-breathed and is profitable for doctrine, for correction, for reproof, for instruction in righteousness; “that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto every good work.”

Second Timothy 3:16 teaches us that the Bible is the written Word of God, exhaled and breathed from the mouth of God Himself. When you come to John 1, beginning with verse 1, you read, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with Him. All things were made by Him that was made, and without Him was not anything made that was made.” And when you get to verse 14, “the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. And we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”

Just like the Bible is the written Word of God, Jesus Christ is the living Word of God. Note how these two things are put together in John 12 and verse 48: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that rejecteth Me,” that is, the living Word, “and receiveth not My words,” the written Word, “hath one that judges him in the last day, even the word which I have spoken.”

The only reason I am showing you this is so that you can understand that you cannot have one attitude toward Jesus Christ and a different attitude toward the Word of God. Nor can you have one attitude toward the Word of God and a different attitude toward Jesus Christ. You cannot say, “I believe in Jesus Christ, but I do not believe the Bible,” or, “I believe the Bible, but I do not believe in Jesus Christ.” Jesus is the living Word, the Bible is the written Word, and they stand or fall together. You may not have one without the other.

Recognition of Christ's Divine Authority

Why did this centurion have such great faith? Our Lord Himself said, “I have not found so great a faith, no, not in Israel.” I believe it was basically because this centurion recognized our Lord’s divine authority.

In Luke chapter 7, after they had beseeched Jesus and told Him, “This man is worthy,” and He was not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to Him, saying, “Lord, trouble not thyself, for I am not worthy that thou shouldest enter under my roof. Wherefore, neither thought I myself worthy to come unto thee, but say in a word, and my servant shall be healed.”

He said, “Say in a word, Lord; you do not have to come into my house. Issue an order. Speak.” For, he continued, “I also am a man set under authority, having under me soldiers, and I say unto one, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it.” When Jesus heard these things, He marveled and turned Him about, saying to the people that followed Him, “I say unto you, I have not found so great a faith, no, not in Israel.” Why did this centurion have such great faith?

Recognizing Christ’s Divine Authority

I submit to you that the centurion recognized our Lord’s divine authority. Why is it that we have such a weak faith? We can postulate that one reason is because we do not recognize our Lord’s divine authority. So let us consider the recognition of Christ’s divine authority.

This centurion recognized our Lord’s authority, but the Jews did not. Many times, when our Lord was acting, the Jews knew that He was acting or a dated late, and they would question His authority. They would not recognize the source of His authority, nor would they recognize that what He was doing, He was doing with divine authority. Why? Because if they ever acknowledged the source of His authority, they would have to acknowledge that He was indeed the Son of God.

Look in your Bibles to Matthew chapter 21, beginning with verse 23. When He was come into the temple, the chief priests and the

elders of the people came to Him as He was teaching and said, “By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority?” They wanted to know what authority He had to do these things and the source of that authority.

Our Lord answered, “I will also ask you one thing, which if ye tell me, I in like wise will tell you by what authority I do these things. The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven, or of men?” They reasoned among themselves that if they said, “From heaven,” He would ask why they did not believe him; but if they said, “Of men,” they feared the people, for all held John as a prophet. So they answered Jesus, “We cannot tell.” He said unto them, “Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things.”

They were demanding an answer: “By what authority are you doing this?” Our Lord answered with one question: “The baptism of John, was it from heaven, or is it from men?”

They knew they were in a quandary. If they said, “From heaven,” our Lord’s answer would be, “If you recognize John’s divine authority, why will you not recognize My divine authority? If God can give John divine authority, can He not likewise give Me divine authority?” In other words, why would they not believe Him? But if they said this authority came from man, everybody would stone them, because everyone knew and believed that John was a prophet of God.

They realized they were backed into a corner and said, “We cannot answer.” Our Lord replied, “Neither do I tell you by what authority I do these things.” The answer they would have been forced to give meant that they must recognize Jesus Christ as the Son of God. As the Son of God, He had full authority to reprove, rebuke, correct, and do whatever needed to be done. Moreover, they would have been required by God to submit to Him, His teachings, and His instructions.

The Bible teaches plainly that Jesus Christ is God incarnate, God in the flesh. First Timothy 3:16 says, “And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.” The centurion recognized that

Jesus Christ was God in the flesh and that He had divine authority. That is why he said, “Lord, you do not need to enter into my house. You just speak the word, and it will be done, because You are God and You have divine authority.”

Delegated Authority and the Chain of Command

Once Christ’s divine authority is recognized, one is in a position to understand delegated authority. God’s authority is inherent and intrinsic; He has it in and of Himself by nature. Moreover, it is total, absolute, and complete. There is absolutely nothing over which God does not have jurisdiction. God has jurisdiction over everything. He is sovereign and has total, absolute authority.

Man’s authority, however, is never inherent, intrinsic, absolute, total, or complete. Any authority that man receives is always delegated authority. Delegated authority simply means that the one who holds total, absolute, and complete authority allows someone else to act on his behalf. He bestows a portion of that authority and says, “Now you may act on my behalf.” Governmental authority, whether personal, familial, civil, or ecclesiastical, is always delegated authority. Kings, presidents, and congressmen—all possess delegated authority.

Daniel 2:21 says concerning God, “He changeth the times and the seasons: he removeth kings and setteth up kings: he giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding.” It is God who removes kings and sets up kings. He is the one who delegates power to them temporarily. It is God who designates and delegates power to congressmen and presidents temporarily.

They do not have any inherent or intrinsic authority. Psalm 75:6–7 says, “For promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south. But God is the judge: he putteth down one, and setteth up another.” That is delegated authority. Whether we are speaking of pastoral authority, family authority, headship, or the church, all of these are types of delegated authority.

The centurion understood delegated authority because the authority he possessed had been bestowed upon him by those higher in authority than he was. He understood that the only power and

authority he had had been given to him. Along with that delegated authority was a limited authority to issue orders, command, and delegate to those below him.

There has always been a chain of command in the military. Anybody who has ever been in the military understands it. That is the first thing you learn when you get into boot camp. A private does not simply knock on a general's door and say, "I've got a grievance to file." It does not work like that. You have to go through the proper channels, the chain of command.

God also has a chain of command, or a chain of order, in this world. Look in your Bibles at 1 Corinthians chapter 11, verse 3. The apostle Paul writes, "But I would have you to know that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is the man, and the head of Christ is God." So here is God's chain of command: God the Father, Christ, man, woman, and, of course, children under that. That is God's chain of command.

Listen to what I am about to say, because this explains how the centurion had such great faith and how we have such weak faith. Do you realize that those who are under authority easily and quickly recognize those who are in authority? Let me say that again: those who are under authority easily and quickly recognize those who are in authority. Even a private in the army is taught to recognize his superiors.

Submission to Authority as a Prerequisite for Leadership

The first thing he is taught is not merely that there is a chain of command, but to recognize his superiors. He salutes the second lieutenant, the first lieutenant, and the captain. He had better not speak disrespectfully to his sergeant. When you are under authority, you are taught to recognize those who are in authority.

Likewise, if we are under God's divine authority, it should be easy for us to recognize those who are in positions of God-given authority. If you are not under authority and do not know how to take orders, it will be more difficult for you to recognize authority.

Let me go a step further. If you do not know how to submit to authority—not God-given authority, not usurped authority, not illegitimate authority, for there is plenty of that, but God-given, lawful authority—and if you do not know how to take orders from lawful authority, God will never use you to give orders lawfully.

What in the world did this centurion say? Lord, speak the word. I know how it is. I'm a man under authority. When my higher ups say jump, I ask how high. When those below me, when I command them, they ask me how high. I understand this, Lord. I'm under authority. I can have authority. I give orders. I take orders. I give orders. Understand this. And so, Lord, since I understand the principle of authority here, I see authority in you. Now, let me say it again. If you do not know how to submit to authority and take orders, God's never going to use you to give orders.

Do you realize that even Jesus Christ himself knew this simple lesson? Now, let me show you. I want you to turn very quickly in your Bibles, first of all, to Hebrews chapter 3 and verse 1. Then we're turning back to John chapter 5. OK. Hebrews chapter 3. I can quote these verses, but I want you to see them. Look in Hebrews chapter 3 in verse 1. Look what the Bible says concerning Jesus Christ. Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the apostle and high priest of our profession, Christ Jesus. Now, there's a lot of preaching to be done on that verse, but there's one word I want to point out. Look at it. Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the apostle. Consider the apostle and high priest of our profession, Christ Jesus. Do you realize that Jesus Christ is called the apostle? Do you know what the word apostle means? It's from the Greek word apostolos. Literally, the word apostle means a sent one. Do you realize the phrase that is used to describe Jesus Christ more than any other in the New Testament is the phrase the sent one?

For instance, look in your Bibles back to John chapter 5. John chapter 5 and look at verse 27. You're going to find that Jesus Christ was not only sent by the Father, but He was given authority by the Father. Look in John 5 and verse 27 to begin with. John 5 verse 27. The Bible speaking, in fact, let's read verse 26, for as the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself, and

hath given him, that is the Son, authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man. Now note, if you would, he's been given authority. Look in John 6 and verse 38. Here it is, John 6, verse 38.

What did our Lord say? “For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.” Why did Jesus Christ come? Primarily, to do the will of the Father. He said, “I came not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.” In verse 40, He continued: “And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day.” He came to do His Father’s will. It is just that simple. And when He came to do His will, the Father gave Him certain authority.

Christ's Example of Submission and Exaltation

Turn to Philippians chapter 2, because this passage shows how thoroughly our Lord learned the simple lesson of being under authority and submission. This is a very important passage, called the kenosis, or kenotic, passage. If you ever study theology, this is one of the main passages you will have to learn not only to interpret, but also to explain and defend, because there are so many errors concerning it.

Philippians 2:5 says, “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.” Whatever was the mind of Christ in this area, God says it should be our mind and our way of thinking. Christ, “being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.”

This is the passage called the Kenosis passage because the Bible says that He emptied Himself; that is, He made Himself of no reputation. Jesus Christ, who is God eternal, the second person in the Godhead, willingly emptied Himself of His glory and authority in order to submit Himself to the will of His Father. In submitting Himself to His Father's will, He not only became a man; He became a servant.

The power that Jesus Christ exercised upon this earth, even until His death, was the power and authority that His Father had given Him as the Father's servant. In John 10:17, our Lord says, “Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again.” Certainly, He could take it again; He is God, God in the flesh. He could do whatever He wanted to. Yet He also says, “No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.”

The power that Jesus Christ exercised while He was on this earth was the power God the Father had given Him, the authority He had given Him as the Servant, the Sent One, the Messiah, and the Redeemer.

This is what is so astounding in this passage. Jesus Christ is the eternal God; there never was a time when He was not, and there never shall be a time when He is not. He had eternal power and glory, total satisfaction in and of Himself, and total communion with the Father and the Holy Spirit. Yet He willingly laid aside the glory that He had in the independent exercise of His Godhood and became the servant. He became obedient, even unto death, and the worst type of death, death upon the cross. Jesus Christ did not and would not act independently of the Father.

That was the temptation in Matthew chapter 4, when Satan said, “If thou art the Son of God,” or since thou art the Son of God, command these stones to be turned into bread. What did our Lord say? “It is written, Man shall not live by bread only, but by every word which proceedeth out of the mouth of God.” In other words, Satan, if you think you are going to tempt Me to display My power and act independently of My Father, you are mistaken. I will not.

“Come on, jump off this temple. All these kingdoms I’ll give you.” If you think you are going to tempt Me to act independently of My Father and jump ahead of Him, you are crazy. I’ll go through the valley of death that He has designed for Me. I’ll bide His time and wait until He gives Me the kingdom. I will not act independently of My Father. Why? He was a servant. He came to be the Father’s servant. He came to do the Father’s will. He is the sent one.

John 8:29 is one of the most beautiful verses in the Bible: “And he that sent me is with me. The Father hath not left me alone, for I do always those things that please him.” What did Christ come to do? The will of the Father. He came to please the Father. He came to do the Father’s will. He was the sent one.

Here is our Lord’s perfect submission to His Father, His perfect taking of orders and submitting to authority. When He had done so, even unto death, Matthew 28:18 shows the reward that the Father gave Him. After His resurrection, because of His perfect obedience, Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, “All power,” that is, all authority and all jurisdiction, “is given unto me in heaven and in earth.” Because our Lord obeyed the Father perfectly, the Father bestowed upon Him again all authority and power—everything that He had before He laid aside that heavenly splendor and came down to the earth.

But let me ask you a question. If you had all power and all authority, could do whatever you wanted to, and no one could ever call you into account, what would you do with it?

I can hear the wheels turning. I hear people saying, “I tell you what I’d do, brother, I’d clean house. I’d clean some clocks. I know what I’d do.” Well, let me show you what Christ is going to do. Look in your Bibles to 1 Corinthians chapter 15. Let’s begin reading with verse 24. Remember, He had all authority. He willingly laid it aside and became the servant. Then, as a reward for His perfect obedience, the Father gave Him all authority again.

“Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and all power.” And I thank God for that. I thank God for the new world order. Everything’s going to be put down. Everything’s going to be brought into conformity to the Word of God. “For he Christ must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.”

“For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith all things are put under him”—that is, Christ has everything—“it is manifest that he that is God the Father is excepted, who did put all things under him.” And when all things shall be subdued unto Him,

that is, unto Christ, when Christ conquers everything and everyone, “then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.”

What will our Lord do? He’ll come back to the Father and say, “Father, I surrender everything to You again, that You may be all and in all.”

When one has learned to be under authority, it is easy to recognize authority. When one has learned to take orders, God will most likely use that one to give orders. But if you cannot submit, and if you cannot take, God will never use you to give. What did our Lord do? Our Lord learned to take, and then learned to give. This centurion said, “Lord.”

Neither Time nor Distance Diminishes Christ's Authority

“You don't even have to come into my house. I'm a man under authority. I know how to take orders. But, Lord, I've got folks under me. I know how to give orders. Lord, you're the sovereign. You just give the order, and my servant shall be healed.”

Christ's recognized authority leads us to understand that neither time nor distance diminishes His authority. Once you recognize that God the Father has given Him all authority in heaven and earth, you must also understand that neither time nor distance diminishes that authority. The centurion said, “Lord, You speak the word. You don't have to come into my house. You don't have to be physically in my house, or anywhere near my house, to heal my servant. Your authority is pervasive. Neither time nor distance counteracts it. You just speak the word, and my servant shall be healed.”

He said, “I know how it is to give orders. I say to one, Go, and he goes; I say to another, Come, and he comes. My soldiers are at my beck and call. But I'm also at the beck and call of my superiors. Lord, I know how to give and I know how to take, but all You have to do is speak the word because You have total and absolute authority.” He recognized that Christ could simply speak, and it was done. We get to thinking, “Oh, God, would You please come down here and straighten this mess out?” He doesn't have to come down here. All

He has to do is speak from where He is. Neither time nor distance diminishes His authority. This centurion understood authority: “When my superiors command me, I jump. When I command my soldiers, they jump.”

Lord, You are sovereign. When You speak, all must obey. When You speak, all darkness flees, all demons run, and all sin and sickness must disappear. Why? You're the sovereign of the universe, and neither time nor distance can affect You or Your authority in any matter whatsoever. Just speak the Word. Would to God that our present-day politicians, preachers, and people recognize this principle. Our Lord's authority has not been diminished. He may not be walking on this earth, but He's seated at the right hand of God the Father with all authority in heaven and earth. All He needs is to speak the Word. It should be our greatest desire to be that type of servant to our Lord.

We come and go at His bidding. We walk in the direction of His Word. We run where He sends us. We return when He calls us. We do what He appoints us. Our attitude should be that of Samuel: “Speak, Lord; thy servant heareth.” Lord, we are willing, we are ready, and we will do that. Christ sits enthroned at the Father's right hand. Neither time nor distance diminishes His authority.

Applications: Faith, Delegated Authority, and Unshakable Confidence

That old centurion recognized this, and that was the basis, I believe, of his great faith. Matthew 8 and Luke 7 record the first miracle really performed at a distance in the New Testaments. There was one in the Old Testament, where Elisha healed Naaman at a distance when he went and washed in the Jordan River seven times.

Christ does not need to be physically present for His authority to be exercised. Here is the first implication: the centurion's great faith was exercised and based upon his understanding of the authority of Christ. If we wish to increase, grow, and exercise our faith, we must, in some degree, comprehend the sovereign authority of Jesus Christ. We must grasp the fact that all He needs to do is speak.

How did this world come into existence? He spake, and it was commanded; He commanded, and it stood fast. All He needs to do is speak. It does not matter whether it is healing, judgment, or health; all He needs to do is speak, and it is done.

Here is the second point, and I want to emphasize this: Christ's delegated authority is equally His authority. I want you to turn in your Bibles to 2 Corinthians, chapter 5, in just a moment. I want to explain a verse to you. But first, let me explain my statement with an illustration that you can understand. I have four children.

Suppose my family is back home and the children are young. If I say to my oldest daughter, Wendy, "Your mother and I are going to be gone for two hours. While we are gone, you are in charge. Make sure the younger girls clean their rooms, do what they are supposed to do, and watch over them. Make sure nothing happens to them. Your mother and I will be back in two hours. Until we return, you are running the show," then she has temporary delegated authority.

If Wendy looks at her younger sisters and says, "All right, girls, get to your rooms and get cracking. Get those rooms cleaned up. When you are through, we are going to straighten up this room. If you do not, you are going to answer to me, because I will have to answer to Dad," you understand that, when I give her that authority, it is still my authority. I have asked her to do this; she is there in my place as my representative. Do we understand that?

Now, let me tell you why I am giving you this point. What if the younger girls say, "You do not have authority over us. You are not Daddy or Mama. You are just an older sister. We do not have to obey you"?

If they heard me and knew that I had left her in charge, whose authority were they resisting—hers or mine? Mine. That means that two hours later, when I come back home, I will deal with it.

You can see that very plainly. Here is the problem we have in preaching, and I will be dealing with some of this in the not-too-distant future. Countless people have come up to me after I finished preaching and said, "Preacher, you know, that sounds good. If I heard God say it, I would believe it. But that is just what you say." All I have done is explain and quote Scripture.

It is like a friend of mine. People are so funny. He was a preacher getting a haircut, and the barber brought up the doctrine of election. The barber was against the doctrine. I do not know how you can be against a doctrine that occurs seventy-three times in the New Testament alone. You have to believe something. But anyhow, the barber at all. Finally, my friend said, "Look, just hush." He reached into his pocket, pulled out his New Testament, and opened it to Romans chapter 9. All he did was read Romans chapter 9 aloud. When he finished, he closed his Bible and said, "There, do you not believe that?"

The barber said, "Not the way you read it, I do not." How else can you read what is there? It is there. "Well, let me show it to you. How else can you read this? Look in 2 Corinthians, chapter 5 and verse 20. I want you to look at what the Apostle Paul said."

This will put a whole different light upon preaching if you will grasp it. In 2 Corinthians 5:20, the Apostle Paul says, "Now then we"—and he is not talking about God's people in general, but about preachers in particular; I do not have time to go through the entire context—"are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be reconciled unto God."

First of all, an ambassador, or someone with an office, is someone with authority. This is a special sense. It is not merely that we are ambassadors in general and represent someone. An ambassador of the United States is an ambassador with an office; he has authority and has been officially appointed to represent the United States. This is exactly what Paul is saying about preachers.

Now look what he says: "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us," or through us. What is he saying? He is saying we have been duly appointed the delegates of Jesus Christ, and now God is beseeching you by us or through us. Remember, I said earlier, if my children resisted the authority that I bestowed upon my oldest daughter, they would be resisting me. You remember that?

Do you know what our Lord said in John 13:20? Let me quote it for you: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth me; and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent

me." Now let us work this out. Christ said, if you receive Him, you receive Him that sent Him. That is the Father. If you receive whom He sends, you receive Christ. But the opposite is also true. If you do not receive the representative of Christ, you do not receive Christ. If you do not receive Christ, you do not receive the Father.

Now, what has Christ done? Christ is seated at the right hand of God the Father. We understand that. What has Christ done? He has delegated authority through His preachers to speak His Word for Him. Now listen to me. Speaking the Word for Christ does not mean I stand here and give you my idea and my opinion. No, no. When I speak for Christ, it is when I am explaining, expounding, and applying the Scripture. You understand that? It is the Scripture that is the Word of God.

Now look again at 2 Corinthians 5:20: "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us," or through us; "we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." Let me deal with this word "stead" just momentarily. The word is huper in the Greek. Do you know what the word means? It is the exact same word used when speaking of the substitutionary atonement of Jesus Christ. What did He do? He died in our stead, our place.

What did the Apostle Paul say? "We pray you in Christ's stead." That is, we are here in His place. Christ is seated at the right hand of God the Father, but He has delegated authority to His preachers to declare His Word. Therefore, we are praying you, in His stead, be reconciled unto God.

Those who reject and refuse the preaching and teaching of the Word of God are rejecting Jesus Christ. If I do not attend the preaching of the Word of God, does that mean I am rejecting Christ? Yes. If I do not believe the preaching and teaching of the Word of God, does that mean I am rejecting Christ? Yes, it does.

For He said, "He that receiveth whomsoever I send." I am not talking about any preacher, but about God's preachers—not preachers merely standing up and spouting their opinions, but preachers who are actually expounding the Word of God. That is the Word of God. When you say, "If God said it, I believe it," what do you

think the Bible is? It is the Word of God. God did say it, and all I am telling you is what God said.

The reason most people reject the preaching and teaching of the Word of God is that they do not understand authority, nor do they understand delegated authority. They do not understand that Christ has sent men in His stead to teach His Word and proclaim His truth.

If we understand Christ's sovereign authority and His delegated authority, it should lead us to an unshakable confidence and faith in Him, since neither time nor distance can diminish His authority. What He said, He will do. What He has promised, He will perform. What He has predicted, He will bring to pass. He cannot be hindered, thwarted, overthrown, stopped, or conquered. Consequently, 2 Corinthians 1:20 says: “For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen unto the glory of God by us.” The promises of God in Him are yea and Amen. They will come to pass. Nothing can stop or hinder them—not a new world order, the Bilderbergers, or Skull and Bones. No one and nothing can stop Jesus Christ from fulfilling and performing His promises or His curses.

Unilapse a basis for unshakable faith. Lord, You may be in heaven; that does not matter. You can shake their tree with Your Word anytime You please, and fulfill Your promise to me or to anyone else with Your Word. Just speak, Lord, because Your authority cannot be diminished by time or distance. He is the Sovereign of the universe.

Father, we ask in the name of Jesus Christ that You would be pleased to help us, teach us, demonstrate and show us, and enable us to comprehend Your divine authority. May we have great faith, unshakable faith, and unbounding confidence in You. We know that You are too loving to be unkind and too wise to make a mistake. Give us grace, Lord, to serve Thee acceptably with reverence and godly fear. In Thy name we pray, Amen.

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