

Spiritual Growth

Repairing & Rebuilding Firm Foundations In Christ

Session Six

Understanding Authority & Welcoming its Cover

Opening Prayer

❖ What Happens When We Come into the Kingdom of God?

We come into the rule and dominion of God. God has placed everything in its proper order. He gives all authority from His throne. He is not responsible for how people use their authority; however He will judge their use of it in the end. Each one will give and account as to how they have used the authority given to them by God and further each one will give an account of how they responded to those in authority throughout their life.

Open by reading a passage from Watchman Nee's "Spiritual Authority" *The Controversy of the Universe*.

Authority, the Controversy of the Universe

The controversy of the universe is centered on who shall have the authority, and our conflict with Satan is the direct result of our attributing authority to God. To maintain God's authority we must be subject to it with all our hearts. It is absolutely necessary for us to meet God's authority and to possess a basic knowledge of what it is.

Before he knew authority Paul tried to wipe out the church; after he had met the Lord on the Damascus road he saw that it was hard for the feet (human power) to kick against the goads (God's authority). He immediately fell to the ground and acknowledged Jesus as Lord. After that, he was able to submit the directions given him by Ananias in the city of Damascus, for Paul had met God's authority. At the moment he was saved he knew God's authority as well as God's salvation.

How could Paul, being a clever and capable person, listen to the words of Ananias—an unknown little brother mentioned only once in the Bible—if he had not met the authority of God? Had he not encountered authority on the road to Damascus he could never have been subject to that obscure little brother in the city. This shows us that whoever has met authority deals purely with authority and not with man. Let us not see the man but only the authority vested in him. We do not obey man but God's authority in that man. Otherwise, how can we ever learn what authority is? We are on the wrong road if we meet man first before we obey authority. The opposite is the right way. Then we will not mind who the man is.

God has purposed to manifest His authority to the world through the church. God's authority can be seen in the coordination of the various members of the body of Christ.

God uses His utmost power to maintain His authority; therefore His authority is the hardest thing to come up against. We who are so self-righteous and yet so blind need once in our life to encounter God's authority so that we may be **broken unto submission** and so begin to learn obedience to the authority of God. Before a man can "submit" himself to God's delegated authority he must first meet God's inherent authority.

How does the word "submission" make you feel?

Bring out that we are afraid to submit.

Why do we fear submission?

We see the imperfection of others (focusing on man instead of God). We want to stay the same (selfishness).

How do we respond to authority when we are in fear of it?

Protest, rebellion, etc.

What must we do to get over our fears?

Trust God to show Himself strong on your behalf. This is the kind of heart God wants; people who will let Him be their Defender – "My Rock, my Fortress, my Deliverer...my High Tower" (Psalm 18:1-3).

Freedom from fear of committing to a life in God's order requires a decision as to whether or not I am willing to believe He will never let me down if I commit to a trust in His overruling providence. That is what Jesus did in surrendering to the Cross (Heb 5:8). And the same "taking up of the cross" is His summons issued to each of us; a summons which calls us to die to the world-way of fear, distrust, and independent "taking things into my own hands" (Luke 9:23-24).

What is the key to learning how to live a submitted Life?

I must learn how to not take things into my own hands.

Read Ephesians 5:21: Submit yourselves to one another in the fear of God.

Keys to submitting yourselves one to another:

We must be completely accepting of 1) **the weakness**, 2) **the imperfection**, and 3) **the learning** which is in process in each other.

- ❖ Submission: Our Mission is to be Under His Authority
- ❖ The Grace of Yielding
- ❖ Our Cover, Our Protection.

Submission – My mission is to be under His authority!

Let's dispel some myths about submission right off the bat. The word in and of itself literally means to come under another person's mission. Sub meaning to come under and of course a mission is the plan, purpose and pursuit of an individual / organization. This is why a godly relationship between people / organization will always produce a desire to see the future hopes and mission come to pass. We will do whatever we can to help ensure success.

When we hear the word submission, many of us think of abusive parents / husbands / boyfriends, harsh employers, or any behavior that challenges our personal beliefs or sometimes our very existence. Submission was actually meant to be a blessing. The very design of authority in the kingdom of God is setup to protect and to defend. Anyone who is in authority over us should be protecting us and defending us. They watch out for our souls and keep us on the right track. Good, godly authority will also bring correction and guidance to us as we learn and grow.

Unfortunately, when sin entered the world, so did wrong authority. When man and woman sinned and rebelled against God they willfully chose to go against God's plan and God's authority. This is when individuals began to rule over each other in harsh/inappropriate ways. We need to know that it is not the plan of God, nor was it ever His plan, to rule over His people in a harsh manner. He guides us with gentle correction, love and mercy. So too does He desire all in authority to do the same.

What does God have to say about authority?

First and foremost, we are to submit to God. Love what God loves and hate what God hates. Purpose in our hearts to do His will and walk in His ways! We are also to serve God with a grateful heart.

How do we serve God? By serving others!

We are to do everything as if we were doing it for God Himself. Jesus said, "I have not come to

be served, but to serve!” Jesus served people! So no matter what we are doing, even when we don’t want to do it, we are to do it as unto the Lord. Do it just like you would if Jesus was standing right there.

What do I do if my authority asks me to do something that is wrong?

Don’t do anything that violates the laws of man or the laws of God. When an authority asks you to do something that violates either, respectfully decline and tell them why.

What will God do if I’m submitted under harsh authority?

He will deliver you. Remember though, He will deliver you in His time and in His way.

How will God deliver me?

He will open a door of opportunity for you to move out from under the authority or He will change the heart of the one in authority.

What do I do while I’m waiting on God to deliver me?

Serve with joy and faithfulness. Pray and ask God for wisdom to know what to do and how to do it. Be a blessing! Do everything as unto the Lord. This leaves the door wide open for God to move on your behalf.

Does God ever want me to be abused or violated?

Certainly not! If there is ever a threat of physical harm, even if just words, get out.

Submission & Agreement

As you know it takes no effort at all to submit to someone who is kind and gentle. We will follow them and obey them till the end of time. Submission doesn’t even come into play until there is disagreement.

What happens when two people disagree?

They have to come to some sort of agreement. This may require one or both bending in their opinion or desire, but agreement must come so that the two can continue in their relationship. One or both of the people must yield in some way, then the grace of God is released into the situation.

What is required if I'm the one who disagrees?

Go to your authority and tell them what you are feeling. Ask them to help you understand what is going on. Many times there is information you are lacking and when you hear it, you will be happy to agree.

No matter what, we have to learn to live under authority. We should learn how to operate in authority and how to receive from our authority. Always remember, God put them there for your protection and defense. They are meant for your good. Even the harsh ones will teach us what not to do and they will help to build our character as we wait on God for deliverance. Learn to love authority and be thankful to God for it. Remember God expects them to watch out for our souls.

This week's assignment:

- ❖ Look for ways to honor and submit to authority in your life
- ❖ Journal about the opportunities you had and how you responded
- ❖ Be ready to share with the class next week