

SPIRITUAL AUTHORITY

I think we could all agree that rebellion is rampant in our society. It takes different forms. Some plot ways to circumvent the IRS because they hate to pay taxes. The jails and prisons are full of individuals who thought the law did not apply in their situation, or they thought they could get by with their particular crime. Teens rebel against parents, parishioners against pastors and church boards. Both men and women rebel against God. Wives sometimes defy husbands while husbands complain about employers. Countless numbers criticize their duly elected government officials incessantly, and almost everyone has a “know it all” attitude towards those in authority whether at school, home, or work. Few consider being under authority a privilege.

The word of God comes to us in Romans 13, “let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Therefore, whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves” (verses 1-3). Proverbs 29:1 foretells the results coming to a rebel saying, “He who is often rebuked, and hardens his neck, will suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.”

God has set up systems of authority for a reason. They are God’s ministers to us for good. I believe that God can use authority to protect us from destructive accidents, and calamities. It is how he saves us from chaos and evil doers. Unfortunately the defiant, the rebellious, and those who hate authority are self-destructing. Please know that I am not saying that everything that is destructive or painful to us is a result of our rebellion. But I am saying that, for example in so called accidents, someone is usually responsible because authority or laws has been defied, disobeyed or ignored. Often innocent victims are hurt. If you don’t believe me turn to your local newspaper, and carefully examine the news. Just this morning in Denver, police are investigating a shooting, (a man violated a restraining order); a truck accident (someone was speeding); a killing (someone robbed a Burger King); a Taser death (someone was likely drunk).

Now there is also an emotional toll for those who despise authority. They often live in anger and depression; they live in perpetual anxiety and stress. They often spend their lives complaining. The book of Jude reads, “Angels who rebelled He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the

judgment of the great day. Likewise, also these dreamers defile the flock, reject authority, and speak evil of dignitaries” (verses 6 and 8). The rebellion of Korah is specifically mentioned by Jude in verse 11. Korah, Dathan, and Abiram’s rebellion against Moses and Aaron resulted in: first, their entire families being swallowed by the earth; second, fire killing 250 incense burners; and third, 14,700 grumblers dying in a plague! (Numbers 16). The Lord himself said, “the carcasses of you who have complained against Me shall fall in this wilderness, all of you who were numbered, according to your entire number, from twenty years old and above. Except for Caleb the son of Jephunneh and Joshua the son of Nun, you shall by no means enter the land which I swore I would make you dwell in” (Numbers 14:29,30).

I am afraid for our generation. There is so much grumbling, complaining, bitterness, and rebellion. Do not think for a minute that there are no consequences for those who defy authority, who bellyache against their children’s teachers, who are perpetually angry with the President, the Supreme Court, and our military. Yes, we have the right to exercise First Amendment rights, but we must be in submission while doing so. That means we recognize that all authority is from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God! Therefore Paul in Acts 23, after he reviled the high priest, apologized and said it is written, “you shall not speak evil of a ruler of your people.” The question to which I know the answer is, “were we as Christians in subjection to President Clinton and now to President Bush? Were we in subjection to Nixon and Carter? Did any of us pray for them or merely tell jokes about them?”

Consequences

We may think that because we are forgiven, identified with Christ in death, burial, resurrection, ascension, and enthronement that there will be no consequences to behavior described above. Don’t be daft!

As ones who are in Christ Jesus, we certainly will be presented before Him blameless and without fault. However, while we are on the earth there are children watching us, and there are non-christians observing us. There will be strife, conflict, and disputes for those who are rebellious, for those who walk according to the flesh. The Bible tells us to reject a divisive man after the first and second admonition. Furthermore, He reminds us in Hebrews 4 that those who rebelled did not enter His rest. He said in Hebrews 4:11 that

we must “be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience.” He is referring to the children of Israel who were denied entrance into Canaan.

What About Injustice by those who rule?

We are not finished with this topic. Next time we will look at injustice and unfairness by authorities. We will also look at the privileges and rewards for those who are in subjection and for those who obey. We need to examine the differences between submission (subjection) and obedience. What should we say about those who rule over us and are incompetent? Does God grant an exception clause to subjection in such times? Watch for our fall newsletter.

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