

The Power of Authority

Week 10 · 1 Peter 2:13-14 · Source week: 11

Understanding spiritual authority, honoring authority, and walking in delegated authority.

Summary and Authority Thesis

M2 Week 11: The Power of Authority

Summary

Last week, we discussed the principles of sowing and reaping, specifically how those principles apply to money and finances. We learned that God is looking for Sowers, but not all Christians are Sowers--many are eating all their seed! We also learned that the laws of sowing and reaping are immutable. Even secular farmers know that if you plant a seed, you will receive a harvest in kind, and that the harvest is much greater than the single seed that was sown. There's one principle that flows into this week's lesson--the truth that unless a seed dies, it cannot reproduce. The same is true with our walk in Christ. We must die to self, for God to use us, in order to achieve all that He has for us and for us to walk in our purpose.

Everyone is under authority, and all of us wield authority. How we submit to authority affects our effectiveness as Ambassadors and Sons of the King.

Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority, or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right. (1 Peter 2:13-14 NIV)

What Is Success?

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Let me tell you a story about a man I know quite well. The man went to church in his mid-20's and gave his life to Christ. He met a girl at church, fell in love and got married. He got a good job, tithed and was faithful in church. He got a promotion. He and his wife had their first child. He got another promotion. He started a 401k and a 529 plan, bought a bigger house and a nicer car. The man's wife called him one day and let him know they were pregnant again. This time with twins. Work became more demanding. Life became more demanding. Pretty soon, the man was spending much of his time at work. He'd come home tired and grill out in the backyard on the weekends, drink a few beers and watch the game with friends. There were dance

recitals and play dates. Country club and Rotary Club. Family vacations and speaking engagements. Life, on the outside, seemed pretty good for the man. But it wasn't. In his heart, he was empty. He was searching for something more. He felt incomplete. He had everything, yet... He was empty. I know this man pretty well, because he was me.

I was headed for a crash, but I didn't see it coming.

Many men live their lives with a worldly definition of success. For years, I thought that being a good provider was "success". I was respected at my job, at church and among friends. I was putting roots down in my community. I cut my neighbor's yard when he went through a tough time, and I was always ready with a few extra dollars when I met someone in need. Everything seemed just right, but it wasn't. I defined success by two things that were very dangerous:

What I had or what I accomplished.

What others thought of me.

Neither of those things were lasting. I was living for myself, with my own pre-defined version of what being successful was. Unfortunately, that definition was an ever-moving target. There was always someone that made more money than me, there was always someone with a nicer vacation, bigger boat, or better Facebook life. I was the ruler of my life--chasing the American Dream. Many would say that I had found it, but inside, I was empty and broken because I was my ruler, I was my own authority. I did what I wanted to do and justified everything else.

Eventually, I sought out what was missing in an inappropriate relationship with a girl at work. My marriage eventually ended, and I was broken. Everything I had worked so hard for was demolished. My family was lost. The bitterness and anger I felt towards myself caused a spiral of depression. I was no longer myself, trying to soak up the broken places with alcohol and even sometimes, drugs. The brokenness changed me--most of the people I called friends no longer wanted to be associated with me. I had been prideful. I had lived the way I wanted to live, and it got me absolutely nowhere.

A Turning Point

During that time of searching for answers, I remember watching "A Football Life" about the Fearsome Foursome. One of the members of that vaunted LA Rams defensive front was Merlin Olsen. He had also been an actor on the show, "Little House on the Prairie". I used to watch that show with my girls and wish for a simpler life. The "A Football Life" episode highlighted Olsen and his success both on and off the field. It seemed like everyone that was interviewed talked about what a great man Olsen was. (He died in 2010). Olsen stated that the secret to his success was a personal mission statement that he lived by:

The focus of my life begins at home with family, loved ones and friends. I want to use my resources to create a secure environment that fosters love, learning, laughter and mutual success. I will protect and value integrity. I will admit and quickly correct my mistakes. I will be a self-starter. I will be a caring person. I will be a good listener with an open mind. I will continue to grow and learn. I will facilitate and celebrate the success of others."

I'm not saying that his mission statement is the answer, but it was clear to me that my focus had been all wrong. I was really convicted when I read his mission statement. I realized that I was interested in my own success and not the success of others. I was focused on my life and not the life that God wanted for me. I was focused on what people thought of me and not what God thought of me. I realized that it was pride that motivated me, not my Father's will. I didn't love God or other people. I loved myself.

I didn't know how to lay down my life before I felt so broken that I had no other choice but to reach out to God. I hope that you aren't like I was. I hope you learn that what God wants for you is far better than anything you can imagine. He won't take second place in your life. He will make you uncomfortable until you submit to Him. You can't belong to Him as a son without being chastened. Hebrews 12:6 says, "because the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and he chastens everyone he accepts as his son." God taught me some very important truths that I would like to share with you. These truths helped shape my life and because of these truths, I now have a peace and a joy that I cannot explain.

Truth 1: God Is the Authority of My Life

Truth 1: God is the Authority of my life. My life doesn't belong to me.

I had read Matthew 6:33 often. My grandpa had a little placard with the verse on his kitchen table. It says simply, "Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and everything else will be added unto you." Seeking first the Kingdom seems almost un-American. It sounds good in theory, but contrary to the "American Dream". You may ask yourself, "What if God wants me to go to Africa, or do something radical?" If you're asking that question, then it's very likely that God isn't the authority of your life. When God asks us anything, our answer should be simply, "YES!".

The first step in coming back to a proper order is understanding that God loves you and wants what's best for you. You have to trust Him. You have to learn to love Him and know that what He has is better than what the world has. There are no accolades, riches or power that the world has that can compare with Him! His yoke is better than the worlds. John 8:34 says, "Jesus replied, "Very truly I tell you, everyone who sins is a slave to sin." You may think, "I'm not in sin. I am a good Christian and that may be true. But if you aren't willing to say, "YES!" to EVERYTHING that God asks, then you aren't in Him. 1 John 2:15 says, "Do not love the

world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them. (NIV) Your overarching desire should be to build the Kingdom. If that's not your main focus, you have a serious AUTHORITY problem. The First Commandment cannot be kept if you have any other God's before Him.

Now is a good time to take inventory. Do you have anything that you place in front of God? There are many healthy things that can become unhealthy when we place them before our desire to serve God. Even your wife, your children, your parents, the travel baseball schedule, your favorite team or show, your hobbies, your music, your money, your poker night... If any of these things gets out of balance, they will become an idol. At that point, God will pursue you and correct you because He loves you. He will make you feel dissatisfied if there is any authority in your life that has jockeyed past Him!

Is there anything that might be in front of God in your life?

You are His. You belong to Him. He died for YOU, and if you accepted Him as my Savior, you MUST accept Him as Lord. There is a beautiful freedom in submission. Matthew 11:28-30 says, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

Jeremiah 29:11 says this clearly, "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." We have to trust Him. I had to give Him the reigns of my life and stop trying so hard, and when I did, things started happening and a peace came over my life that I can't explain. His burden is easy and light. Every Word He ever spoke is true. When I decided that I would live under His authority. My life began to take shape. I felt fulfilled. I felt like I had purpose.

What does it mean to live under God's authority? That means that I abide by His Word and what His Holy Spirit teaches me. I know there is much debate on whether or not the Old Testament laws still apply or not, and I'm not here to challenge your theology, I'm only here to tell you what worked for me. I started believing God's Word like I was a child. When I was a little boy, my mom would say that dinner was ready. I'd come out of my room and there it was, on the kitchen table. She never said that dinner was ready, and I went to the table to find there was no food! My mom loved me, and she did little things for me so that I would know that she loved me. She wouldn't lie and tell me there was food on the table when there wasn't. I started believing that my Father in Heaven is the same. He loves me and He wants what's best for me. He made me for a reason, and the price He paid for me was very high. When we accept Him as our Lord and Savior, that means that our will is set aside, our old self is dead and that His will reigns supreme in our lives. I believe that and I trust God because He sent His Son to die for me. If He asks me to do something, then I'll do it. My answer is, "YES!".

Truth 2: Honor Authority

Truth 2: God Has Called Me to Honor Authority

I admit, I can be prideful at times. Every now and then, I like to exceed the speed limit. I used to think speed limits were really just speed suggestions. That may sound kind of funny, but those thoughts are symptoms of a pretty serious spiritual problem. There were other rules I didn't like, so I just wouldn't follow them. I thought that if a rule was dumb or even unfair, then it wasn't for me. I was that way about a few of my supervisors in my life, as well. If I thought that one of my superiors wasn't going to give me the answer I wanted, I would ask the other one or worse yet, I would do what I wanted and then ask for forgiveness later. I hope this doesn't sound familiar, but if it does, God is calling you to repent. Let's look at what God says about the authority that has been placed over us:

Romans 13:1-2 "Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. 2 Consequently, whoever rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves."

Notice there are no footnotes or asterisks at the end of the verse. We are supposed to honor those in authority, even if we disagree with them. There is a limit to the authority over us and that is God's authority. Any time a law is in direct contradiction with the Word of God or God's law, then we do not obey it and we live with the consequences. The Bible is clear in Revelation that the world will turn on Christians. We shouldn't be surprised by this, but we should be prepared for persecution. We should decide now whom we will serve. It's not going to be easy in the Last Days.

God will promote you when He can trust you. He loves you and wants what's best for you. But can He trust that you'll honor those in authority over you? Are you a good steward of those relationships? As we are the Ambassadors for His Kingdom, God is looking for good and true Ambassadors that represent Him well. We can't have all that God wants to give to us if we're not good stewards of the position and placement we currently have.

James 4:6

But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: "God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble."

Truth 3: Spiritual Authority Over Me

Truth 3: I Will Never Ascend Higher than the Authority I Place Over Myself

One of the most important decisions you will make in your life is what spiritual authority you place over yourself. Be careful in this decision. Be aware of what and who you are placing yourself under. Jesus said in Luke 6:40, "The student is not above the teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like their teacher."

Is the Bible their Authority?

Do they walk in Integrity?

Are they fulfilling the Great Commission?

Do you have a place to serve?

Are you growing?

Being under the spiritual authority is essential to a thriving Christian life. Hebrews 10:25 says, "And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near. (NLT) That verse means that we should meet regularly with other believers. I know that these days, you can listen to a podcast or watch church from the comfort of your own home, but that's not assembling with others. You may not need the church, but your church needs you! You are called to do good works and it's difficult to do those good works from your own sofa! There was a time in my life that I stopped going to church because I disagreed with some small, petty thing that each church I attended did. I would find petty little things that I disagreed with about nearly every church I attended. (Boy, was I arrogant!) Finally, I felt like God told me that until I was perfect, I needed to attend an imperfect church! There are no perfect churches because there are no perfect people! I found the right church for me at that time. God placed me under the authority of a great pastor, teacher and mentor.

Q: Who is your spiritual authority?

Write down the names that come to mind. If no one comes to mind, let that become something to pray about seriously.

Truth 4: God Gave Me Authority

Matthew 16:18:

"And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."

I know you're not Peter, but this passage of Scripture is for all of us that are in Christ. You have authority to bind and loosen. You are the Church. You are Sons of God. You may boldly go before the throne of God and ask Him for anything, and He will be faithful to give to you because you've asked with good motives. (John 16:23) You have the power to bind and to loosen. You have the power to cast out demons. (Mark 3:16) Proverbs 18:21 says, "The tongue has the power of life and death, and those who love it will eat its fruit." What you say matters. Your words have impact and power. God made all of Creation with His voice and you are His son. You were made in His image. You have that authority now because Jesus gave it back to us.

Quick History Lesson

When God made Adam, He gave Adam all authority over the earth. (Genesis 1:26-28). The devil, Lucifer took dominion from Adam when Adam and Eve disobeyed God. Until Jesus took the dominion from Lucifer by dying on the cross and rising again, Lucifer most certainly ruled this world. Jesus said so in John 14:30, "I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming, and he has nothing in Me." (NKJV)

You have the more authority than you think! In Mark 16:17-18, Jesus clearly says, "And these signs will accompany those who believe: In My name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up snakes with their hands, and if they drink any deadly poison, it will not harm them; they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will be made well."

These are the last words that Jesus spoke to His disciples. These are the last recorded words that Jesus spoke while here on the earth. I would think that if Jesus were standing right here with us, He would reiterate these words to us. We have authority over sickness, over disease, over demons, over everything listed in Ephesians 6:12, "For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places."

Closing Summary

Summary

When you place your life under His authority, then He can trust you with more. He will give to you a fulfilling life and promote you. He will give you the peace of knowing that you are doing exactly what you are called to do. Your purpose is intertwined with the authority that you place over your life. My prayer for you is that He is truly your Lord and your Savior. That His grace and peace flows through you and that you are not seeking the feeble, fleeting things of this world, but seeking Him. Furthermore, you may not agree with the laws, regulations, taxes, or rules that you are supposed to live by, but you're called to honor them. You are called to be a stickler for those rules and to honor them to the letter. God will honor those who honor their authority.

Be careful of the spiritual authority you place over your life. You'll never rise above those who are over you. Lastly, be aware that you have the power over the enemy. He has already been defeated. He can't win if you engage! Engage! Take the battle to Him and know that the One with you is greater than the one against you. 1 John 4:4 says, "You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world."

Go and take the Promised Land of your life. God has a special plan He made just for you. You are so close to understanding the purpose of your life! Now that you understand authority, you can start understanding the One who is in you, which is the next public lesson!