

P A R T T H R E E



One of the biggest, if not the biggest, problems we have in the U.S. today is an abhorrence of and a disrespect for authority. This began in the 60's and gained tremendous strides during the 70's and 80's. By the 90's it was totally out of control. "Self-esteem," as taught in our public schools, has put the icing on the cake by teaching our children that they are number one in everything. The failure of that teaching was made apparent last year (2003) when a study was done on drug use and it was found out that the students with the most self-esteem were the ones that were most likely to use drugs. Another indicator of it's failure is the rise in crime in our public schools and among teenagers and younger children on the streets of any city in America. Also it is apparent if one simply visits any public school or the average home today, that the average young person today, whether as a student in school or a child at home, has no respect for authority nor, in most cases, for themselves or for anyone else other than (maybe) a close-knit circle of friends. And really they have no respect for those close friends which is easily seen by the way they encourage one another in sinful behavior, or if you will, illegal behavior, but rather simply try not to hurt them overtly. Above everything else, one will observe that other than in a minority of the young people today, respect for authority is totally lacking and it is easy to see that authority is, in fact, viewed with animosity. Anyone who tries to tell them what to do is resisted and viewed as somehow being the enemy.

On the other hand, we who are of the previous 2 generations are just as guilty as they are. In fact, they learned their animosity to authority from our two generations' slide into worldliness and our "me first" attitude which we passed on to them. The hippie generation of the late 60's through the late 70's rebelled against authority and those same folks are now running our country in our name. And those of us who were never involved with the hippies have still allowed their rebellion and lack of morality and respect to infiltrate our society and even to take root, in a larger or smaller amount, in our own hearts and effect our core values which are needed to have any kind of a decent and peaceful society. And we let them do it! In fact, our generation has encouraged the propagation of general rebellion against authority by both our actions and our inaction.

This rebellion against authority that is so widespread in our society has insidiously infiltrated our churches- even our Independent Baptist Churches! And when we adults act in rebellion against authority, then we are teaching our children to do the same. Roast preacher, roast deacon, roast member, is served up on a plate to the children, and new members for that matter, and then we wonder why those who have been so taught grow up to do the same things to others. And it seems that the higher up the biblical rung of loving authority God places one in the church, that the more the heat is turned up by the cooks, reinforcing to the church members what is taught as the norm in our society today- rebellion against authority!

With that said and the stage of societal rebellion set, we will now narrow our study down to the Local Church and biblical authority; and, why we are to yield to, yea help enforce, and follow the authority that God has set over us.

I. The Church's Authority.

To begin with, we must ask ourselves three questions: (1) what authority does the church have; (2) how did it get that authority; (3) how is that authority enforced.

A. What authority is given to the Local Church.

Remember, along with privilege always goes responsibility; and authority is a privilege conferred upon one by the giver of it. And some privileges, such as becoming the sons of God, being saved, are conferred upon us out of love and not because we deserve them. And other privileges must be earned before they are conferred upon one by the giver. This would include a place of loving authority in the Local Church which is earned by faithfulness to the giver and by proper preparation to carry out the responsibilities that go with it. However you may believe that one is given authority, I think we can all agree that it is always a privilege conferred; and, since privilege carries responsibility, then we can also say that along with authority goes responsibility. Responsibility to be faithful to exercise the authority given to you, i.e., you are responsible to the boss to do your job; and, responsibility to be fair and effective in exercising the authority given to you.

With that said, what authority has been conferred upon the Local Church.

1. The authority and responsibility to evangelize, baptize, and teach.

a. The authority and responsibility to spread the gospel.

Speaking to His church, He gave us this authority.

Mt 28:19 “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations...”

Mk 16:15 “And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world,
and preach the gospel to every creature.”

Acts 1:8 “But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you:
and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea,
and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.”

b. The authority and responsibility to baptize.

Mt 28:19b “... baptizing them in the name of the Father,
and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:”

c. The authority and responsibility to teach those saved how to live godly lives.

Mt 28:20 “Teaching them to observe all things
whatsoever I have commanded you:”

d. Where did this authority come from?

Mk 16:15 “And he (Jesus) said unto them, Go ye...”

Mt 28:20b “... and, lo, I (Jesus) am with you alway,
[even] unto the end of the world. Amen.”

e. How is that authority enforced?

By the power of God Himself!

Jn 20:21 “Then said Jesus to them again, Peace [be] unto you:
as [my] Father hath sent me, even so send I you.”

Mt 28:18 “And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying,
All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth”

:19 “Go ye, therefore...”

**:20b “... and, lo, I am with you alway, [even]
unto the end of the world. Amen.”**

- f. When we, as a church, obey God and spread the gospel - and baptize - and teach them to obey and do the things that God has taught us, then the very power of God is with us and will empower us as we lovingly carry out the responsibilities that He has given us as His Local Church.
2. The authoritative responsibility to judge and carry out discipline upon errant members who refuse to repent and be restored to godly living so that they don't infect the body with their unrepentant sin.
- a. The authority, as a church, to judge the actions of the members.

I Cor 6:5 “I speak to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you? no, not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren?”

- ▶ But what about:

Mt 7:1 “Judge not, that ye be not judged.” (Also Lk 6:37)

- ▶ In context, that is not saying that the Church is not to judge but that individuals are not to judge!

Jas 4:11-12 “Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of [his] brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law: but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge. There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy: who art thou that judgest another.”

- ▶ Rather, it is up to individuals to try to restore the erring one.

Gal 6:1-2 “Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.”

- ▶ We are to judge whether their actions are biblical or not and that is all we can do.
If we let them be judged by the Word of God then we are asking God to judge us in the same way.

Mt 7:2 “For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.”

If we let the Word of God judge them and then we show mercy and seek to restore them, then we can expect God to judge our actions according to His Word and to likewise show us mercy and restoration.

- ▶ The Local Church is to carry out judgement upon the unrepentant sinning member.
- The Local Church is the body of Christ; and Christ is the judge of the world.

Jn 5:22 “For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son:”

- And the Church is to let God's Word judge the erring brother or sister.

And God's Word tells us we are to turn the unrepentant sinner over to the devil for the destruction of the flesh that the erring brother or sister might be freed.

Mt 18:15-17 “Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear [thee, then] take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell [it] unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.”

I Cor 5:4-5 “In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.”

b. Where does that authority and responsibility to judge come from?

According to **I Cor 5:4** (quoted above), that authority is “**In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ... and my spirit.**”

c. How is that authoritative responsibility enforced?

Again in **I Cor:5:4** “**with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ**”; therefore, it is enforced with the power of the Lord Jesus Christ. Remember, the Local New Testament Church is the body of Christ and as His body they are empowered with His power.

3. The authoritative responsibility to propagate the Kingdom of Heaven.

Mt 16:19 “**And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.**”

a. If we do not carry out this authoritative responsibility, then we are binding the Kingdom of Heaven; i.e., we are locking, or at least not opening, the door to the Kingdom of Heaven for the lost.

Contrariwise, if we do carry out this responsibility, then we are opening or, if you will, “loosing” the door of the Kingdom of Heaven to the lost.

b. Where does this authority derive from?

In **Mt 16:19** we find that it is from the Lord Jesus Christ.

“**... I will give unto thee...**”

c. How is it enforced?

Since it is delegated to us from the Lord Jesus Christ, then it is His power that enforces that authority.

4. Summary.

a. The Local New Testament Church has been given the authoritative responsibility to Evangelize, baptize, and teach new members to obey God and do the things He commands. They are also given the authoritative responsibility to judge and carry out discipline upon errant members who refuse to repent and be restored to godly living. It also has the authoritative responsibility to bind or loose the Kingdom of Heaven.

b. Those authoritative responsibilities are delegated to the Church, which is His body, by the Lord Jesus Christ.

c. And the power by which the Church’s authority is enforced is the power of the giver of that authoritative responsibility- Jesus Christ Himself.

II. Authority in the Church.

There is an old saying that an organization, be it a family, a business, or a society, is chaotic or has or is about to fail because “There are too many chiefs and not enough Indians.” The New Testament Church is both an organism, the body of Christ (see the earlier segment on What Is the Church), as well as an organization. I say this because an organism without organization will die. Each part of the organism has to fulfill its proper function in order for the organism to live and to properly function.

In this segment we will concentrate on the organization of the organism and the delegation of authority in that organization called the Local New Testament Church.

A. Certain terms are used in the Bible to denote those in authority and those in servitude in the Local New Testament Church.

Now I understand that all Christians are servants of Christ. That is a biblical fact that is stated over and over in the Bible. However, there are certain terms that are used to delineate certain groups and individual members of the Local New Testament Church that are specifically designated as rulers (those in authority) and those who specifically serve under that authority in the local Church.

1. Bishops & Deacons. (Phil 1:1)

- ▶ “Bishop” Gk *ep-is’-ko-pon*, an overseer

The qualifications for bishops & their wives are found in **I Tim ch. 3** and **Ti ch. 1**

- ▶ “Deacons” Gk *di-ak-an-os* and its derivatives: a servant

The qualifications for deacons & their wives, are also found in **I Tim ch. 3**.

2. Elders. (Acts 20:17)

- ▶ Another name for a bishop showing that bishops must be chosen from among the mature members of the Church.

Titus 1:5-7 “... For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee: If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly. For a bishop must be...”

“Elder” Gk *pres-boo-ter’-os*, the older members of the church

- ▶ It is obvious that “bishops” (overseers) must be chosen out of this “elder” group of mature Christians.

I Tim 3:6 “Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil.”

3. Presbyter.

Another name for an elder or a bishop. Actually translated from the exact same Greek word as elder.

I Tim 4:14 “Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery.”

”Presbytery” Gk *pres-boo-ter’-i-ou* from *pres-boo-ter’-os*, (see “Elders” above) the older members of the church

And, according to **Ti 1:5-7**, this group, the presbytery or elders, is the one from which the rulers (bishops/overseers) of the church are to be chosen.

4. Pastors (including one of their main jobs, teaching).

Eph 4:11 “... pastors and teachers;”

- a. “Pastors” **Gk** μ , *poi-mane-as*, a herdsman, esp. a shepherd; the presiding officer, manager, director, of any assembly: so of Christ the Head of the church, a pastor- the overseers of the Christian assemblies

The tasks of a Near Eastern shepherd were:

- to watch for enemies trying to attack the sheep
- to defend the sheep from attackers
- to heal the wounded and sick sheep
- to find and save lost or trapped sheep
- to love them, sharing their lives and so earning their trust

- b. “Teachers” **Gk** , *did-as-kal-os*, one who teaches

- c. The pastor in the New Testament Church is the one who, as the undershepherd under Christ, has the authoritative responsibility to lead and care for the Church. He is also authoritatively responsible for the teaching, or overseeing the teaching, of the precepts of God, from the Word of God, to the Church under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

5. Summary.

The terms bishop and pastor are terms used to delineate the one who has been given the authoritative responsibility to lead the local New Testament Church. And that benevolent ruler, under Christ and by His power, is to be chosen from among the elders (presbytery) of that local Church body.

Also, the deacons are those faithful men who are chosen specifically to be menial servants, under the pastor, to serve in the Local New Testament Church.

B. The delegation and exercise of authority in the Local New Testament Baptist Church.

The delegation of authority to the pastor/bishop/ presbyter who oversees, guides, and protects the Local New Testament organization which is the organism known as the body of Christ.

Warning- This authoritative leadership in the Local New Testament Church is not to be one of dictatorial power to suppress the members of the body and force them into a direction conceived solely in the mind of one man or group of men; but rather it is to be the benevolently exercised authority of one who seeks only the good, the edification, the protection, and the direction of the church as it is conceived solely in the mind of God and revealed by Him through His Word and the power of the Holy Spirit.

This can be summed up in a warning: Pastoral authority is not to be exercised as a dictatorial authority but rather a benevolent one derived from God and exercised solely in the way He dictates in His Word, to bring about His will in the Local Church organization; and it is to be exercised solely for the purpose of facilitating the health and proper functioning of the organism known as the Local New Testament Church which is Christ’s body.

1. The delegation of authoritative responsibility to lead the Local New Testament Baptist Church.

- a. The delegation of authority to the pastor.

It is to the pastor who is known by two terms- pastor and bishop.

- ▶ As pastor we have seen that he is the leader who is authoritatively responsible to protect and nurture the Church, out of love for them, as he shares their lives—including their perils and failures as well as their successes and blessings. And who, in addition, is authoritatively responsible to teach them or to see to the teaching of them by others, in the way that God would have them to go..
 - ▶ As bishop we have seen that he is the leader who is authoritatively responsible to oversee the Church in all aspects.
- b. The statement of the authority of the pastor and the responsibility of all members of the Local New Testament Church to follow him as he benevolently rules the organization that facilitates the proper life and functioning of the organism known as the body of Christ.

I Tim 5:17 “Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine.”

Heb 13:17 “Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that [is] unprofitable for you.”

Heb 13:24 “Salute all them that have the rule over you, and all the saints.”

I Tim 3:4-5 “One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?)

- c. A warning to the pastors that rule not well but rather exercise their authority as a dictator and destroy the Local New Testament Church.

- ▶ In the Old Testament, God set down the rules for the pastors.
 - They are to feed the people with knowledge and understanding.

Jer 3:15 “And I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding.”

- ▶ And in the New Testament He set down the rules and qualifications for the pastors in the New Testament Local Church. (**I Tim ch. 3** and **Titus ch. 1**)
- ▶ And throughout the Bible He gave them warnings of what will happen if they do not rule the way He wants them to rule and lead in the direction He wants them to lead.
 - They are to be diligent in carrying out their authoritative responsibilities as overseers and watch out that heretics don’t get into the Church and rend and tear it like wolves in the sheepfold. And in addition they are to watch out for heretics that will rise up from within the Church itself.

Acts 20:28-32 “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers (bishops), to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears. And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and

to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified

- They are to seek to lead in the ways of the Lord, else they will come to nought and so will the people they lead.

Jer 10:21 “For the pastors are become brutish, and have not sought the LORD: therefore they shall not prosper, and all their flocks shall be scattered.”

- Those who turn from leading in the way of the Lord shall be blown into the wind.
Jer 22:22 “The wind shall eat up all thy pastors...”

- Those who destroy and scatter the sheep, them shall God destroy!

Jer 23:1-2 “Woe be unto the pastors that destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture! saith the LORD. Therefore thus saith the LORD God of Israel against the pastors that feed my people; Ye have scattered my flock, and driven them away, and have not visited them: behold, I will visit upon you the evil of your doings, saith the LORD.”

- That includes the pastors and anyone else who tries to destroy or defile the people of God or, in the case of the New Testament Church, the temple of God- the Local New Testament Church.

I Cor 3:16-17 “Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and [that] the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which [temple] ye are.”

d. Summary.

The pastor, who is also known as bishop, who is chosen out from among the elders (the older more mature members of the Church, the presbytery), is commanded and delegated by God to be the authority, under Christ, and has been given the responsibility to lead the Local New Testament Church according to the way that Christ wants it to go.

2. The responsibility of the members toward the pastor.

And I am speaking of the pastor who leads the Church as God’s delegated authority in the organization that facilitates the life and health and proper functioning of the organism known as the Local New Testament Baptist Church, which is the body of Christ.

Remember, to disobey those who rule with the delegated authority of Christ and according to the way that Christ commands them to rule in His Word, lovingly and tenderly caring for the flock and leading them in the ways of God, to disobey that one is to disobey the one under whom they rule the flock with delegated authority. To put it another way, to disobey the foreman who is following the rules of the boss, is the same as disobeying the boss Himself. Then to be blunt I would say, to disobey and be disloyal to a godly faithful pastor is the same as disobeying and being disloyal to God Himself who delegated authority to that pastor- just as being disloyal to the Church, the body of Christ, is the same as being disloyal to Christ Himself.

- a. The members are to submit to and obey the pastor as they lead the Church..

Heb 13:17 “Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that [is] unprofitable for you.”

- b. The Church is to take care of the needs of the pastor.

I Tim 5:17-18 “Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine. For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The labourer [is] worthy of his reward.”

I Cor 9:11 “If we have sown unto you spiritual things, [is it] a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things?”

I Cor 9:13-14 “Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live [of the things] of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel.”

- c. The members are not to receive slanderous accusations against the pastor; nor against any of the elders of the Church for that matter.

I Tim 5:19 “Against an elder (from whom the pastor was chosen) receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses.”

What if he gets off into heresy or sin? Then separate yourself from them and let God deal with them. God will judge them. If there are two or three witnesses of their sin, then the Church can take action just like it can with any erring and unrepentant sinning member. Remember, however, we learned in an earlier section that it is not the job of any individual to straighten out anyone in the Church. It is the job of the Church to judge and execute discipline or, in the case we are currently considering, that of a pastor, to exercise discipline and maybe dismissal. As individuals our job is to restore such an one. And the only way a Church can dismiss a pastor is if he disqualifies himself by sinful actions or by teaching of heresy. (See the qualifications for a pastor in **I Tim and Titus**.)

- ▶ Concerning individuals judging anyone, including the pastor-

Ro 14:4 “Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? To his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand.”

Jas 4:12 “There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy: who art thou that judgest another?”

- ▶ Concerning the Church handling the situation, we have already studied that under Church discipline in **I Corinthians** and what goes for any erring member also goes for the pastor.
- ▶ Also, concerning the Church taking action against a pastor, the Bible gives a strong warning. Therefore, extreme caution is necessary when handling such dangerous matters.

NOTE: Remember, a prophet is defined as one who speaks for another; and the

NT pastor and other preachers are the ones who speak the Word of God today.

I Chr 16:22 “[Saying], **Touch not mine anointed**, (meaning the people of God) **and do my prophets no harm.**”

And God declares woe and destruction, condemnation and desolation, on those who unrighteously harm the prophets of the Old and New Testaments- and the pastor and other preachers are the prophets of today who speak the word of God. (See **Mt 23:29-38**)

Therefore, the discipline and dismissal of the pastor, God’s delegated authority in the New Testament Church, is a serious matter that should only be undertaken with much prayer and trepidation. Restoration would be a much better course, but if that is not possible, then discipline is a necessary course but it is one fraught with extreme danger.

III. Summary.

- A.** The Local New Testament Baptist Church is the delegated authority of God on earth today.
- ▶ They have the delegated authoritative responsibility to spread the Gospel, baptize, and then teach the new converts in the ways of the Lord according to the Word of God.
 - ▶ They also have the delegated responsibility to exercise discipline upon erring members who refuse to repent and be reconciled to God.
 - ▶ They also have the delegated authoritative responsibility of holding and using the keys to the Kingdom of Heaven. Binding and loosing both on earth and in Heaven.
 - ▶ And to be disloyal to or rebellious against the authority of the Local New Testament Church that is following God and not into heretical doctrines, is to commit such actions against God Himself because the Local Church is the body of Christ.
- B.** The pastor, also known as bishop, who is chosen out of the elders of the congregation, is God’s delegated representative who has been given the authoritative responsibility to lead, protect, nurture, and teach the congregation and to oversee the Church in all matters.
- ▶ And the members are to willingly obey him as leader and submit to him as he submits to and follows Christ.
 - ▶ And to be disloyal to him and to be in rebellion against him is to be disloyal to and to be in rebellion against the one who delegated authority to him- and that is, of course, God Himself.

There was an old English law from the early part of the 2nd millennium that is a good example of this principle.

“An attack on the King’s soldiers is the same as an attack on the King himself.” This same principle applies to rebellion against God’s delegated authority in the New Testament Church- the pastor. An attack on the pastor is the same as an attack on the King Himself.

Class Instruction

Please return to the class page and take the test for Section Three.