

Having Godly Authority

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I'm just not sure how well I'm cut out for that. But one thing that did stick out to me is we went through Italy. We came in at Naples. We went all the way into, all the way north into France, then cut across in the alps, all the way north towards Austria, and then all the way back south to Naples. And what always kept eating at me, is there anybody who loves Jesus here in this whole country?

Tree. There were churches that were astonishing. You'd be walking down the street, and all of a sudden you'd catch a picture of something that rose so high out of the sky, surrounding the other buildings, these buildings, on immense foundations and huge vaulted ceilings. And you go up the road, and every 100 yards on this small road, some of them, there would be a little statue to marry and all this religious experience that was there. And I kept on asking myself, is there anyone left in this country who loves Jesus?

The churches are absolutely empty.

I mean, these things that must have took so long to build, absolutely empty, no one there. And I wondered, is there anybody left in this country who still loves Jesus? I hope there are. I'm sure there are. But that was my thought.

We came back to the United States, and we're staying with friends. We came into their living room that night, and they sat us down, and we had devotions, and they all read from the Bible. My little girl read from the Bible to us that morning. And it was such a relief, finally. And the next morning, we got in the car and we started down the road,

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and we got to La Grande, Oregon, and we stopped to get some real american coffee instead of this tar or whatever they sell over there.

I don't know if I'll ever recover from that. And we went into this coffee shop to get a shake and some coffee for Stacey. And there were three young girls sitting around reading their Bible. And there was a young black guy sitting there, and he was reading his Bible. I know that may not be a normal experience in America for us every day, but for me, it was such a relief that where we are, there's people who love Christ.

And it's a reminder for you and I, from me, for you and I, that we need to continue a tradition that is real and founded upon God's word, upon the spirit of Christ working in us, and not in some tradition and ancient thing that our ancestors, it is something new and alive to us today, and it needs to continue. I pray in Capelles, in our north beach, but also in America. So that was my experience with Italy. But we're going to be in two corinthians still. And Paul is still dealing with the issue with false apostles.

And now he is using his own experience. He is bringing out areas in his life in a way which he calls foolishness, to demonstrate the difference between his type of authority and the type of authority that other people are using to draw people away from the basic christian methods. And so we're going to go over somewhat two other areas now in two corinthians, I believe, the end of verse eleven and chapter twelve. These areas, again, I need to emphasize that though this may be tedious, we as a generation may need this encouragement more than anyone else. That message which our ancestors have believed is under a dramatic attack from individuals who are displaying the kind of authority here that Paul is preaching against.

We need to be able to recognize that same thing in those individuals so that we may hold strong against it and recognize what biblical authority really is. Now, I need to ask forgiveness because just because I'm the individual speaking Paul's words absolutely does not mean that I'm Paul. And when I tend to use my experiences to equate myself with another person is not accurate. And I do ask forgiveness for that. I am trying as a person to, as clearly as possible with the understanding I have, demonstrate his authority.

That does not necessarily equate that I have any kind of authority, and I do want to ask for forgiveness for that. If I have assumed that in any way, and if there is something good that God done it in my life, I'm grateful for it, but it's not assumed just because I'm the one speaking the words, right? All right, let's go in two corinthians, chapter eleven, chapter eleven, verse 30, and then we're going to go into chapter twelve through six. So chapter eleven, verse 30, and then we're going to go from verse six of chapter twelve. So this is kind of be two different areas that I'm going to try to draw something out that are a little bit different, but we're just going to go through one and then the other.

So chapter 30, this reluctant boasting that Paul is being drawn to in order to explain or show the difference between false apostles and that which he sees in his own life. Verse 30. If I must boast, I will boast in the things which concern my infirmity, the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is blessed forever and knows that I am not lying. In Damascus, the governor under Aretis the king was guarding the city of the Damasinus with a garrison, desiring to arrest me. But I was let down in a basket through a window in the wall and escaped from his hands.

It is doubtless not profitable for me to boast. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord. I know a man in Christ who 14 years ago. Whether in the body, I do not know. Or whether out of the body, I do not know.

God knows. Such a one was caught up to the third heaven, and I know such a man. Whether in the body or out of the body, I do not know. God knows how he was caught up into paradise and heard inexpressible words. Which is not lawful for a man to utter.

Of such a one I will boast yet of myself, I will not boast except in my infirmities. For though I might desire to boast, I will not be a fool. For I will speak the truth if I refrain. But I refrain lest anyone should think of me above what he sees me to be or hears from me. Let's pray.

O Holy Father, Lord, we are a people in desperate need of individuals with godly authority. We are a nation that is losing direction, Lord, that doesn't know the compass

of your word. Lord, we are in desperate need of young men and women being raised up in our church, in our society, in our nation. Lord, we have fallen away. We have slipped, Lord, we have gone astray by looking at people whom you don't lift up, Lord.

And I just ask you to help us to gain some traction, to gain some ideas that might encourage us, but also might allow us to see those people who are godly authority in our lives. In Jesus name. Amen. Okay, we're going to start in verse 31. Regarding this boasting, Paul is bringing out an idea regarding a story that appears to me to be the one immediately after his conversion.

If you remember now, it may be that this happened twice, but it's most likely in my mind, never having studied, that this is a singular occurrence that happened. If you remember, he was on the road to Damascus. And on the road he encountered a great light and a vision from heaven in which he heard an audible voice speaking to him. Paul, Paul, why do you persecute me? That led to his subsequent blindness and then being brought to Damascus.

Being led to Damascus. There he is blind. And through a miraculous intercession where God speaks to one of his disciples, the disciples, come and praise ananias, I believe. Come and praise for Paul. Scales.

Little scales are dropped from his eyes. And Paul is converted, baptized, and immediately begins to preach in the name of Jesus. He confounds those individuals. And because this person who came to Damascus to carry people away and destroy the name of Jesus is now preaching that same gospel which he came here to destroy, it ends up that he is being made a wanted man. And it says here that a garrison was guarding the city to prevent him from escaping so that he must be arrested.

And he was made knowledgeable of that and was let down from the wall with a basket, say, well, this is a good story, but it's not just a story. What Paul is trying to say to us here, what my understanding here is, he was pointing out there is a type of character that should be evident in godly authority. This strain or this streamline is absent from others who would preach a different gospel. It says in the Bible, to the righteous

belongs escapes from death. There is a willingness, and there has to be a willingness in the behalf of a person who assumes or desires to have biblical authority, a willingness to suffer persecution.

Without this, you cannot be a good soldier of Jesus Christ. Paul says, those who desire to live righteous in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. It is not because we live in such a mild age that you and I are not experiencing persecution. It might be easy to say, oh, no one ever does anything. There's no stoning.

There's no mean people anymore. There's no people with sticks. There's no people with whips roaming the street. And you might say that. But I think it's just equally as reasonable to ask ourselves if there's any righteous people left.

What I'm trying to say, it'd be easy for us to say that there's no persecution. It also would be just as reasonable to say, maybe it is, that there isn't people willing to endure persecution anymore. It is interesting, I think it is necessary for an individual who is willing to assume some sort or desire some sort of authority in the church of God. There has to be some desire or willingness to embrace persecution when and how it comes to them. I remember being in southern California and the church that we were drawn to the most.

There was a pastor, and he, this being 20, some 20 years ago, said to me, it seems to me that there is coming down the pipe legislation that will prevent a pastor from preaching on passages that seem to be in contradiction to the homosexual agenda. Okay? And he says, at that moment, it is my duty to preach the Bible, no matter where that leads. If I go to jail, I go to jail. It is my responsibility, no matter how difficult the situations are presented to us, my desire and duty is to preach God's word.

Whether that lands me in jail or not has no importance to me as a young man. That was extremely formative in my heart, that the preaching of God's word is of more value than persecution. There must be, if we are to look up to an individual, not only are they willing to endure persecution, but do they endure persecution. If there are individuals who won't endure persecution, it speaks regarding whether or not their

authority is biblical or not.

We went to Italy, and it's amazing the number of stone churches, big stone churches that are in Italy, right? And we coming home from eating and the door was open and there was a little light inside. And so I'm kind of just tentatively, just kind of know, just to see what do they do in these places at night. And I went in and it looked big from the outside, but from the inside, it was absolutely astonishing. It must have been four times as high as this.

It was covered in paintings. The stuff on the walls was lavish and beautiful and decorative. It was absolutely astonishing. But do you know, as my eyes came down, what I saw? There were less pews in that church than this one.

There was no one in the pews. They were rickety and old and broken looking. And I wonder, what is this for? What is the purpose of this building? What did they do here?

It must have took them years that we could have built probably 15 or 20 churches like this in the same amount of time, and wouldn't have that been of greater value than building that. But my question was, is it right for an individual to peek into that church and think that the church that you peeked into is actually a representation of Christ's church? Is it right to take that view of things and assume that that's what Christ's church actually looks like? I would say no. If we were to look honestly, we can see that Jesus Christ actually has a very big issue with this kind of religion.

When we go back to Matthew and in 23, we have this chapter long speech regarding Jesus and his view of the Pharisees. Right. And do not be called teachers, for one is your teacher, the Christ, but he who is greatest among you shall be your servant. And he who exalts himself will be humbled. And he who humbles himself will be exalted.

But woe to you, scribes and pharisees, hypocrites, for you. Shut up the kingdom of heaven against men. For you neither go in yourself, nor allow those who are going in to enter. Woe to you, scribes and pharisees, hypocrites, for you devour widows houses and for a pretense make long prayers. Therefore you will receive greater condemnation.

Woe to you, scribes and pharisees, hypocrites. For you travel land and sea to make one proselyte, and when he was one, you make him twice the son of hell as yourself. Woe to you, blind guides, who say, whoever swears by the temple, it is nothing. But whoever swears by the gold of the temple, he is obliged to perform it, fools and blind. For which is greater, the gold or the temple that sanctify the gold?

And whoever says, whoever swears by the altar, it is nothing. But whoever swears by the gift that is on the altar, he is obliged to perform it, fools and blind. For which is greater, the gift or the altar that sanctifies the gift? Therefore, he who swears by the altar, swears by it, and by all things on it. He who swears by the temple, swears by it, and by him who dwells in it.

And he who swears by heaven swears by the throne of God, and by him who sits on it. Woe to you, scribes and pharisees, hypocrites. For you pay tithe of mint and nighs and cummin, and have neglected the weightier manners of the law, justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done without leaving the others undone. What I'm trying to say is Jesus had a serious contradiction with established religion that was not based on truth.

It is wrong for you and I to make a description of who Jesus is by what you see around you. Wouldn't it be rather right for us to say, for young people, they desire something exciting, they want to be a part of something real they're looking for, to grab hold of something.

My son wrote something, and it gives me an indication from a young man's perspective what they're looking for, what they don't see in church. This is his desire for this game that he wanted, would make or thought about. White knight survival. White knight survival is an all out offensive game. No mercy.

From swords to spears, it's the castle days. Lords, knights, farmers and peasants, level your way to the top. Beat the bosses, kill the king and get the lords and knights after you in a whiz fight, to your death or to your victory. You can become anyone. Farmer, knight, lord, king.

Totally your choice. But it takes time, so you'll have to level your way to the top. Slowly, though, you don't want to rush it, because you might take on more nights than you can handle. You can play with your friends, neighbors, anyone. What is he looking for?

What are people who are spending so much time trying to level up looking for? Young men tend to look at the church. And do you know how they describe it? Old stones, dead places. And they don't understand that there is an actual biblical approach to Christianity that they haven't even considered, that there is a forward moving that is absolutely real, that is based on escapes from death, hard work, and moving yourself through something when everyone else isn't.

It might be good or nice to condemn the young people in the church, but some of us who are older might also be living vicarious lives through other things. If we would honestly look at. It might be good to say, oh, they need to get off their phones and they might. They need to get off the games and they should. But you and I, there's no restrictions just because they're young and we're older.

We are all called that. If we want to demonstrate some sort of a biblical authority to see Christ move through us in a way that is beyond just having a Bible study, there has to be a willingness in us to confront the difficulty and possible pain that we might encounter if we step out of our houses.

What I'm trying to say is that for you and I, if we want to move forward, absolutely a part of the christian gospel is the difficulty and sometimes painful reality that he leads us into places that are not comfortable. It is something that we should examine for our own life and say, okay, it's not enough for me just to call the church a dead church. There must be a willingness. Am I willing to live in a way that is different and above that dead church in the way that Christ actually walked? You can't paint Jesus with the picture of the church you see.

He is above that. He is leading. He is victorious. He is moving forward. Whether this church or this country or anyone in the world wants to go with him, he is moving

forward.

When we look at those who are in authority, if you see people who are unwilling to engage in the cause of Christ, when it crosses paths of difficulty, it is a moment of reflection for us. We need to look for people who have endangered, like Paul says, lift these men up because they have endangered their lives for the sake of the gospel.

It takes biblical authority and biblical leadership for a church to accomplish what it needs to, should do. Paul says, I tell you the truth. I was let down in a basket through a window in the wall and escaped from his hands. All I know is I look at this young generation so intent on exciting things and accomplishing things. And I thank God.

I thank God that following Christ led me somewhere. I am so grateful for taking that call. And it is my encouragement to all of us. Move forward. The pain.

Yes. The hurt. Amen. It stings. It sure does.

It hurts. It's sleepless. It is. But no one regrets it. We have the opportunity to invest our lives in the lives of other people.

At this point. I am so thankful. And it hurts.

It hurts. It takes resources. It does. It costs a lot of money. It takes time.

You lose sleep. But last week I said to Stacey, do you know what, if any one of these brands pulled from the fire has a changed life? Isn't it worth it? Isn't it worth the direction that they were going that you said, they can't but end up in the pit. There is no way for them to escape and then to be given the opportunity to invest in their lives.

And if they can, I'd say it's worth it. You could have done a lot with the money. You could have done a lot with your food or time. You could have. Amen.

But just think of what could happen if a life has changed.

Chapter twelve. It is doubtless not profitable for me to boast. I will come to visions and revelations from the Lord. I know a man in Christ who 14 years ago, whether in the body, I do not know, or whether out of the body, I do not know. God knows.

Was caught up into the third heaven.

We're going to look at a different section in which Paul is going to point out certain attributes by which he will show the difference between an individual who was an apostle of a man made religion and that one which is more descriptive of following Christ. And he's going to bring up a man who 14 years ago, whether in the body or out of the body, Paul doesn't know, had an experience of being brought into the third heaven. When I look at this and I look at the idea behind it, I try to understand what is being asked here. And I tell a story, or not a story, but a description that may be common to us. A church has a need of a pastor, right?

And so they're going to have some sort of procedure in which they hire this pastor. Now, I've heard this before. It's not something unique to me, but they bring in individuals to see if they meet the qualifications for their pastor, and they begin looking for things. What do they look for? Anyone have an idea?

You can just blow it out. My dad is older than he was.

Right. And I thank God personally that God has shown us as a church the grace that he has because of the immaturity of the elders in this church, that he's given us the stable hand.

But my dad, that could end tomorrow.

There's no question then next week or next year, and hopefully longer than that. But what would we look for in a pastor? This is throughout anyone. Patience, integrity, biblical knowledge. Absolutely.

Faithfulness. Amen. Say it again. Humility. Serving, steadfastness, a lover of Christ.

Amen. But really, what it's going to probably come down to as people come through one at a time, is whether or not they give a good message or they can sing a song and maybe not. And hopefully it won't be for us. Hopefully it's different. But you know what the truth is, can an individual access the throne of Christ in prayer?

Does he have an intimate relationship with God that is expressed in secret by which he or she, in either case, actually comes in contact with God? Wouldn't it be better for there to be an individual with a deep, enduring prayer life than whether or not they're a good speaker, whether they're even faithful, whether they have humility or whichever. And Paul says, look, the thing I'm going to lift up is whether or not this individual accessed the throne of glory, whether they could come into God's presence or not. If you remember Moses having gone through so many trials of leadership, so many difficulties, it really came down to that point in the wilderness when he cried out, Lord, show me your glory. Without that, there was no moving on.

Yes, you can keep trudging, but until an individual can actually hear the voice of the Lord. And I would say that to hear the voice of the Lord, it has to be in a way that is scriptural. Jesus says, look, God is not impressed by the multitude of public prayers. God's not impressed by saying the same words over and over again. If you would listen to a lot of prayers, it seems to be some sort of newscast from the earth to heaven.

We're letting him know just what's going on down here. It's a little bit rainy today, right? That's great. I'm sure he needs to know all about your family, but in reality, what he is saying is a person in biblical leadership needs to have the ability to access heaven. In my mind and what I read from the Bible, that that is a private place, that is a place where no one goes to or sees about or hears about.

But the reward from what happens in that place is greater than all the prayers that can be offered out of religious service put together an individual who is able to enter into the glory of God and access there. Now, there's a few things that we should say about that. He says that he knows this man who was caught up into paradise and heard inexpressible words which it is not lawful to utter. This is not about who can tell the best story about their experiences. So many people who I listen to or have heard

about, it's more like this.

In Colossians, it says, let no one cheat you over your reward. Taking delight in false humility and worship of angels, intruding into those things which he has not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind. So many of us, when we want to recount stories of spiritual experiences, it becomes storytelling time in which one person attempts to outdo the other by relating just how, in graphic detail, what they went through. Paul is saying, look, it's not even lawful for me to talk about those things. The individual who puffs up an experience is not an individual who has actually accessed the throne room of heaven effectively.

It's the person who keeps those things private, who has the most spiritual benefit for those individuals who are around them. Another thing that I would like to talk about regarding this, that he received this individual, I think a lot of people think it was Paul received it 14 years ago. Now, sometimes I wish I were a more effective person. I think of myself and I wish I were 300 pounds, about six. Six.

I was black and I was in a church in the south because there people get excited, but they get excited every week. And it's strange to me that people so excited do so little. It doesn't seem to impact them. Having spent some time in Louisiana and Texas, I was always amazed that churches full of so excited people did so little when they left the church. Real impact, real access into the glory of God leaves an impression upon you.

14 years later, individuals are still moving off the same fuel that they received 14 years ago. It doesn't take in a lot of excitement. It doesn't need to be something jumping up and down, but it's powerful enough to keep a person moving for a long, long time. To ask people who have really heard God's voice, God speaking to them, they are still moving on. The same revelation that they received so long ago.

It is something that moves individual, empowers them, pushes them on. It says how he was caught up into paradise and heard inexpressible words which it is not lawful for a man to utter. It says of one such a one, I will boast yet of myself, I will not boast except in my infirmities. For though I might desire to boast, I will not be a fool. The last thing

just to look at, which I'm a little, I'd say with Paul, honestly, embarrassingly, that we as people, me as a person, I want to lift myself up.

I want to be glorified in some way. I say that embarrassingly. I'm sorry for it. But if we're to look for a leader, all individuals have that nature. Get into a conversation with somebody, sit down and talk with them.

Yeah. I'm the kind of person like, I like to ask those targeted questions. You know how they are. Oh, you lived in Montana? Where at?

Oh, that's nice. This is where I lived. I like to ask those questions that leave me the opportunity to dart in and steal the conversation away from everybody. I'm the kind of guy that sneaks in, unwilling and act like I want to know what they're doing. But in reality, I want to turn the conversation as quickly as possible back to myself and what I have.

Right. I'm not the only one like that. You and I all struggle with that. I've talked with you guys before, too. Right?

All right. But the individual who is a man of God or woman of God who exercise spiritual authority should be a person who isn't intent on boasting about themselves. Amen. And if it is a person, then we need to be aware of it. We're going to close now.

I pray two things for us as people. Number one, we need spiritual authority in our lives. All of us do. Be on the lookout for those who possess it, because they are the ones who are going to be able to impact you for blessing. They're going to be the ones who can leave you with something lasting.

They're going to be the ones that see you move farther on. They're going to be the ones to protect you when the rest of the people have run away, they're going to be your friends through difficult times. They're the ones you need to. They might be ugly, they might have bad breath. They may not be the people your neighbors want to hang out with, but that's not important.

They're going to be the ones for you. Look for them, encourage them and bless them. They're around you. But number two, that you as a person are called the spiritual authority. You are called to demonstrate the things that are biblical because there are people who need you.

There are people you surrounded by. They're looking for your comfort and you need to exercise what is real to them as a Christian.

We're going to close there. Let's pray.

Oh, Father, Lord, we do come to you, Lord. I thank you for the heritage you've given us, Lord. I thank you for the christian message. I thank you for godly people. I thank you for people who have said yes to Christ and obeyed him.

I thank you for America, Lord, for the city we live in and the opportunities you have for us. Oh Lord, direct us, and I ask you to build something long lasting here, Lord, and how far it impacts you only know, but please build something of value in Jesus' name.