

# Biblical Authority

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09 March 2024

You're welcome. We've been looking at biblical authority for a bit when I've been sharing, and we're going to continue that in two corinthians eleven. I believe we're closing in in this section that's taken me quite a long time to go through. It's been good for me and I pray in some ways for you also. We're getting to in, excuse me, two corinthians twelve, one of the final areas regarding biblical authority.

And I would just say that is probably or not probably is the most powerful form of biblical authority, but also the most difficult form of biblical authority. Also one that hurts the most, but one that also helps the most. And so I pray look at that together to be able to examine the authority that we currently are looking at, because you and I are currently receiving authority from somewhere. The question is not whether we are receiving authority or whether we do have authority. It's what kind of authority is impacting our lives.

And I believe that we should, as people, be looking for individuals who have signs or display of biblical authority, because it's their authority, when engaged with us, produces the most fruit. It is the one that leads to the most peace in our lives spiritually. So, okay, we're going to look in chapter twelve of two corinthians, verse seven, seven through ten.

All right. And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan, to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure concerning this thing, I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. And he said to me, my grace is sufficient for you,

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for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Therefore, most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore, I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sakes.

For when I am weak, then I am strong. So I just want to ask you, would you pray for us as a group, as a body that we might gain, gather what God would speak to our hearts today? And so let us pray. O Holy Father. Lord.

We do ask, Lord, as a group of people, as individuals, but also as a church lord, that you would enable us to receive biblical authority in our own lives, to be able to see where it comes from, to be able to know the counterfeit Lord, that we as a group might benefit by it. But also I pray, as you're developing us individually into leaders, Lord, that you would put in place that kind of character, that would be a blessing to others. We do ask in Jesus name, amen. Amen. Okay, verse seven, we're going to start.

It says, lest I be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, just like to know, to start off with the idea that biblical authority recognizes its superiority over the world system, it understands that what it possesses is of a higher quality than whatever the world can produce. It says, I can't remember. I think in ecclesiastes, better is a poor, wise child than an old, foolish king who refuses to be corrected. Individuals who possess a degree of biblical authority, though low in stature, though undermined in nature, though not the kind of person who would naturally be a leader in the outside world, recognizes that the kind of authority we've been talking about is superior to whatever the world can muster. It is the kind of people, I don't know if you remember the poor monk Martin Luther.

And I kind of get the story a little bit wrong, and I'm not an expert in this in any way, but here was Martin Luther, brought to the city of worms under being convicted of preaching heresy in the Catholic Church. And so this holy roman empire brought together the brightest and the most intelligent, the most powerful, surrounded Martin Luther with a group of individuals to demonstrate the greatness of the authority of the Catholic Church. And being subject to that, this monk was forced to come to the conclusion, I stand on God's word. I can do no other. He looked at that display of

power, and to him it was weakness.

He recognized that the word of God which he was standing on was of a better nature and quality than all they could put forth. There is a recognition. This is Peter and John standing before the Sanhedrin, being commanded to saying that you shall not command nor teach in the name of Jesus any longer. They recognized that they were poor and uneducated men, but they recognized they've been with Jesus. They looked at them and they know, judge for yourself whether it is right in your eyes for us to obey God rather than men.

They recognized that the authority that was being presented to them was of less value than the spiritual authority that had been invested in them. There is a potential problem, though. Individuals who recognize that they have something better than what they are surrounded with are led to a possibility of being prideful when you recognize that the quality of possibly the wisdom that God has investing in you is better than what you see around you. This is exemplified in the life of Paul one time when he was brought before the council. And he says to them, he says, I have in all conscience fulfilled my duty before God.

The high priest commanded or gave an indication to the soldier standing next to Paul to strike him on the face. I could imagine Paul coming back, blood coming from his mouth. And he looks at him and he said, God will strike you, you whitewashed wall.

Then the guy next to him looked at him and he said, do you dare revile God's high priest? Said, I didn't know it was God's high priest. There was a thought in him that he said, in this heart, he said to the priest, you sit and judge me according to the law. Do you strike me in disobedience law? He recognized that that individual who was supposed to be the authority didn't display any real biblical authority.

And Paul spoke against him. There is the possibility that you and I, being brought to a place of recognizing God's spiritual authority, have the opportunity to become prideful. Paul says in verse seven, unless I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelation, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan, to buffet

me lest I be exalted above measure. God seems to have a good plan for those who he gives revelations to. Everyone excited about that work which God is doing in your life.

It is not something to hurt us. But there is a step which, if we as people are going to experience the fullness of God's authority in our own life, it cannot be completed or brought to maturity until we are brought to this place. It says that in lest Paul be exalted, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan, to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure, lest they be brought to the place of James and John of arguing who would be greatest in the kingdom of God, lest there be this outcry of I am the person who has authority, or this is the person that has authority, lest there be some sort of schism. Those people who are in authority, God has granted a special gift which not only humbles them, but also makes them more effective. This gift is being described here as a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan.

I wear different hats, right? I have a lot of different things that I have a hand in. I don't say no to many things. And so as a result, I wear a lot of different hats. But one of my hats that I wear in my house is thorn or sliver remover.

And I have a special relationship with my kids that happens in every one of their lives when they have a thorn in their flesh. And it is my job to convince that child that what I am going to do to them is for their own good. I tell them stories. I tell them, do you know that if you leave this thorn in your flesh, what is going to happen to you? It is going to get pussy and infected.

It is going to hurt more day after day. And if you still won't let me take it out, we're going to have to cut off your finger. If you still won't let me cut it out, it's going to grow. It's going to turn into gangrene and infect your arm. And, you know, having armed myself with so much, know, forward moving, I get out my scalpels, right, that we found in Los Angeles, a whole box of scalpels.

And I convince them that if they just hold still, I will cut open their fingers and take the sliver out, and they'll barely feel it right now, Stacey and I, notwithstanding. You guys are grimacing. Stacey has a different means to do it. She takes their fingers and her

hard nails and she pushes on it as hard as she can until the sliver is supposed to come out, right? So you might have your different means, but I personally feel I cut my slivers out every.

So that's my job in my house as a sliver remover, right? But Paul says that he had a thorn in his flesh. As we look at this, we have to ask ourselves, what is the thorn in his flesh? Some people are literalist, and they think that he had a thorn in his flesh, right. He was walking down the road one day and he stepped on a thorn, and it was a great irritation to.

And, you know, like Satan, like my kids may feel that Satan was the one who came and put his finger upon that spot and made it hurt more. I'm not sure that's exactly what happened, but some people do actually believe that this thorn in his flesh is essentially a physical thing. I've heard it said before that PAul was an individual suffering with acute sickness regarding the eyes, and that was the thorn in his flesh, that he was in a miserable condition, and SatAN was the one who brought that upon him in some way. Whether you agree with that or not, that's not my position to say. But that is what some people feel.

Other people feel that the messenger was just that, a messenger, someone who followed him from town to town, like we see in one of the towns, that Jews from one city followed him to the next. And it was this messenger of Satan who caused havoc in his life, stirring up trouble, causing confusion, that that was the messenger. But as I look at it, and I'm in no way anyone who has studied. I try to take what scripture says and try to understand it through that lens. And those are not necessarily the fullness of it, though I think Paul definitely did have physical struggles, though there were absolutely individuals stirred up by the devil to confront him and to bring sort of physical punishment upon him.

Can't be doubted. But I'm not sure that this is what the Lord is talking about here.

When I just like to go to Romans.

What is this thorn in the flesh?

I believe about romans seven, chapter seven, verse 14. For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin. For what I am doing, I do not understand for what I will to do, that I do not practice, but what I hate that I do. If then I do what I will not to do. I agree that the law, that it is good, but is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.

For I know that in me that is my flesh, nothing good dwells. For to will is present with me. But how to perform what is good, I do not find. For the good that I will to do, I do not do, but the evil I will not to do, that I practice.

We'll just continue. In verse 24, he comes to the conclusion. O wretched man that I am, who will deliver me from this body of death. I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind, I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh, the law of sin.

We see that in Paul's flesh, as he grew in spirituality, there was an understanding that there was a warfare going on in him. The things that he knew he should be doing, his flesh was working against him doing it, the things he knew he should not be doing. His flesh was at work with the law, producing in him all manner of evil desire. I hope that you can see that. Yes.

Hey, in my own self, I struggle with the same thing. I also have this thing innate in my flesh that I wish were gone.

If you can look at the pain in your relationships, and if I just weren't such a jerk, things would be a lot better if I were just a little bit more motivated in my work, if I just had some more self control, if I just weren't attracted to all the wrong places, things would be go a lot better for me. If you could see there is something going on in me that I wish were changed. If that weren't enough, if our flesh wasn't such a deceitful trap, if the curse hadn't had such an impact on our lives, if it hadn't infected us so deeply, would be fine. But then there is added on top of that, it says, a messenger of Satan to buffet me. You and I, despite the curse that we see in our lives, the destitute of our moral nature, the emptiness of what we possess, the lack of strength.

If that weren't enough, it seems like at some time God allows the minister of the devil to put his finger upon that point, which hurts so bad. It's like a person with a sliver having an accuser whose job is just to push on it. You say, does that happen? Does God allow that? We're not too far from looking at our friend, our job, and Satan being brought into the presence of God, as if to given the opportunity to press that hurting spot in Job's life, it seemed like God even willed it to be magnified so that Job could see it, even clear that the rawness of the wound would even be greater.

Does God allow that, and is there a reason for it? I would say that biblically we must come to some conclusion that God has allowed this kind of thing in our life for a purpose, for a reason. If there is anybody who could say to me, this is not of my nature, I would have a strong problem with it. In John it says, if anyone says he is without sin, he is a liar. It's not saying that we should be controlled by sin or that sin should have a loud outward expression in our life.

I'm saying that sin should be to every believer. We should be aware of its dangerous and negative impact on our lives, or we should just recognize and recoil at the power that it has had and its ability to do damage in our own life. The issue is not in my mind whether or not you struggle with sin. It's whether or not you allow biblical maturity to promote in you that kind of lifestyle that leads to maturity and authority. The question in my mind is not whether you struggle with sin, whether you're a coward, whether you're evil, whether you're lustful.

I have no question in my mind because I am beginning to see my own heart and I can't but sense that you're the same as me. The question is not whether you struggle with sin. The question in my mind is what we do with it, whether or not that purpose of God, which he allows and even encourages, is accomplished in your life. My question is not. Is whether you are being led towards biblical authority or not, whether this final and beautiful thing which God invests in our life has been effective or not.

When we find ourselves in that position of struggling with sin, how do you handle it? When there's no excuse for it, when you can't even begin to tell someone that it was justified, when there's nothing you can do to atone for it, how do you handle it? In

verse eight, we see Paul beginning to address this situation that is so grievous in his heart that's being exaborated by the messenger of Satan. If you remember Martin Luther coming home from worms, he was kidnapped in some way for his own good. I don't know if everyone remembers the story.

And he was brought to a castle, and there he was held captive. Know whether a lord or a duke or whichever, for his own safety by a friend. And he was in that castle and he was in his room. And he would be awakened at night by a spiritual entity that would attack him. And he would spend all night railing and fighting against this demonic influence that would enter his room.

Might read the story about that. It's interesting. And he had to prevail spiritually against this messenger of Satan that he believed to come against him. How do we deal with it? How can we encounter this situation and emerge victorious from it?

Verse eight. It says, concerning this thing, I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me, you and I. As we encounter these kinds of circumstances in our lives, we are tempted to address them in different ways.

We are tempted to address the sin we see in our heart that is brought to bear upon our lives in different ways. Not all of the ways in which we deal with sin is effective or godly. There are individuals. I like to say that there are three different major ways that we deal with our sin. Some people make excuses for it.

They blame other people. They think that their problem is actually the direct result of what someone else has done. They blame shift. They push the responsibilities on others. Another way in which we do things is we punish ourselves in some way.

We bring some sort of punishment ourself to try to atone for our sin. And the last way is we offer some sort of sacrifices and try to do good deeds to bring atonement for our sin. But Paul says here that he pleaded with the Lord three times. I believe that when we encounter this kind of area in our lives, we recognize there is a spiritual war being waged in my flesh that is attempting not only to draw me away from the Lord, but to undermine that work which God is doing in me and through me. It is time to plead with



the Lord.

There is an actual physical, spiritual work in which an individual puts themselves in the position with the intent of pleading with God. It is different than blaming other people for your problems. It is different than trying to do good works, to try to atone for it. I would like to say that my wife would rather have a changed husband than a basket of flowers making excuses. Is that my wife or someone else?

Right there is a pleading with God. It says, elijah was a man with a nature just like you're in yours, you're in ours. And yet when he prayed heaven, it didn't rain for three years. There is an ability to plead with the Lord. If you remember, Hezekiah was in a nation of Israel at a time when the kingdom of Assyria was exerting its influence over that area of the world, becoming the world power.

And it attended to exert its influence over Israel. Also, it had taken over some of the less important fortified cities. And the Rasheka came to Israel and in an attempt to undermine them, to humiliate them, it began to mock not only Hezekiah, but the God of Israel. And he said, can your God do anything more than the gods of harshers? Can they do any other?

Is he stronger than the guards of Savarim? And he mocked the God of Israel. Hezekiah, burdened in his heart, recognized that what the rab shekha was saying was true. No other nation had been able to stand against him, that God had given every other nation into his hand. And he came and he took the letter that the rabbseka, when Hezekiah got this report, he came and took the letter that was said, and he spread it out before the Lord.

He just took it into God's temple without any excuse and just said, this are the facts. There's nothing I could say against these things. This is who I am as a person. This is the strength I have. I can't argue with the situation.

But he presented those facts before the Lord, recognizing that with the Lord there's power that doesn't belong to man. With the Lord there's deliverance that doesn't belong to man. With the Lord there is something more to take your case and plead

before God. Not asking for forgiveness, not necessarily even asking for atonement, just asking him, Lord, this is the reality of the situation. This is who I am.

This is the thorn in my flesh. This is what the devil is attempting to do. I believe there is a real earnest pleading with God that is powerful and effective, but in some cases, we don't get an answer the first time. I would say that in a lot of cases we do, when there's really an earnest pleading with God, a lot of times when we lay it straight without any of the involvement of the world's philosophical means, there is honestly, a lot of times, relief the first time we plead with God. But sometimes we need to come again.

For whatever reason, God's patience with job was long and it hurt. It was still Job's responsibility to bear long in the trial that God was leading through, why it didn't happen in the first day. It belongs to God. We have to submit that case to him. But Paul said, three times I have pleaded with God, and still the thorn was, there still was a place where the devil could put pressure upon.

I think in that case, it came to a point with Paul saying, look, this is out of the ordinary. This is not the accustomed way in which I've dealt with the Lord. There must be some hidden purpose here that I don't understand. There must be something of more value. There must be something beyond what my physical eyes can see that I just have to trust in.

This is the word that he got back from the Lord. And so when you and I come to a place of feeling that we exhausted our revenues, that spiritually we've come to the Lord in a way that we should, that is obedience. That's not trying to make excuses. And it still remains. What happens when God doesn't immediately take away your burden?

What do you do? I believe this is one of the final things of spiritual authority that is so difficult for us to grasp, that remains out of our reach and so leaves us immature. There is a point where God does not take away our burden. He leaves it in place. An immature person says, when Jesus says to the people, do you also want to leave?

After the disciples left him, they said, this is a hard teaching. Who can endure it? And most of the disciples left at that point. When Jesus said to Peter, and he said, do you want to leave also? We don't understand it either.

We don't know what you're talking about. But who else holds the words of life? Who could you go to besides the Lord? When things get difficult, though his ways seem cloudy or murky, they're there, hidden by darkness. Who could you turn to?

Who would you go to besides the Lord, who is kind like Jesus, who is wise like the Holy Spirit? Where would you go? Even though the path seems difficult, I would say we have to stay there, even though his ways aren't known to us. In verse nine, he said to me and he said to me, my grace is sufficient for you. My strength is made perfect in weakness.

Therefore, most gladly, I rather boast in my infirmities that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Here in this last form of biblical authority, we see that Paul is expressing that it is found through an individual's weakness and sinful nature, where a person can't look to any soundness in his flesh and just has to look at the face of God. Where you and I are driven to a place of having nowhere to turn and all we can do is just look up into the face of the Father through Jesus Christ. I know that that's a difficult place to be, but it is a place that we sometimes are brought to. And I would just like to, as we close in this, I have a few things to say, but the goal of this idea is to bring us to a place of spiritual power and movement, that from this place more is accomplished than through every other form of spiritual authority.

Isn't that strange? I believe here that few people actually come to the place of being actually broken to such a degree that they have nothing to offer and can do nothing except look into the face of Jesus Christ. And yet, from this place of weakness, I believe more spiritual work is accomplished than from any other place. How you and I rail against this, we hate it, we avoid it, we sidestep it. Everyone remember Saul, right?

And he had a spear, but not only did he had a spear, he had a tremendously bad habit of trying to pin people to the wall with it. And you and I are just, like, trying to avoid it.

And the Lord is just like, okay, one day you're going to hold still enough, and I'm going to deal with this. I'm going to bring you to that place where we can say, oh, Lord, I have nothing. I just want to look into your face.

And I believe that from that perspective, from that place, more spiritual work is accomplished than from any other place. Next time I want to go to psalm 108. You are in this place. I love psalm 107, and it gives five different areas in which a person should cry out to God.

I'm just going to read from the person's perspective and not how God delivers them from this. But when you find yourself in this position, starting in verse four, and this whole thing is about giving thanks to God because of his deliverance in each of these areas. But if you find yourself in one of these areas, I would like to encourage you that it is not an attack of God upon you. It is not God's displeasure with you. It is not even the fault of your flesh.

But then when you are brought to these place to remember, this is God's opportunity for you. He is smiling upon you, hoping to bring you to a place of looking into his face. Verse four. They wandered in the wilderness in a desolate way. They found no city to dwell in.

Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them. Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble, and he delivered them. Some of us feel maybe like we're just wandering lost. Verse ten. Those who sat in the darkness, in the shadow of death, bound in affliction and irons because they rebelled against the words of God and despised the counsel of the most high.

Therefore he brought down their heart with labor. They fell down, and there was no one to help. Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble, and he saved them out of their distresses. Some people could recognize and say, with me, you know I am. And when God spoke to me, Jeremy, you're a slave to sin, your own sin.

What you did, the things that you determined to do with your own hands and of your own will, and you sinned against God led you to slavery. This kind of situation. Verse

17. You might say that I'm one with his people. Fools, because of their transgression, because of their iniquities were afflicted, their soul abhorred all manner of food, and they drew near to the gates of death.

Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble, and he saved them out of their distresses. Maybe you could say with me I am a fool. I am just not a smart person. I have made so many stupid mistakes in everything I've done. And you might be drawn.

You know, the Lord isn't bringing you to a spot like that to punish you, but to cry out to the Lord. The last one in physical distress. Verse 23. Those who go down to the sea and ships who do business on great waters, they see the works of the Lord and his wonders in the deep free commands and raises the stormy wind which lifts up the waves of the sea. They mount up to the heavens.

They go down again to the depths. Their soul melts because of trouble. They reel to and fro and stagger like a drunken man and are at their wits end. Then they cry out to the Lord in their trouble, and he brings them out of their distresses. You might be a person who is in a physical situation where it just seems like the waves are hurtling over your head.

Jim talked to me last Sunday about taking a kayak out into the ocean, and I have done that before. Lost a kayak. Felt like I was going to drown. But I've also been out there in the midst of the ocean, on a surfboard on those days when you probably maybe shouldn't have been there. And to lay on a surfboard and watch a wave 6ft above your head crash upon you is not fun.

And it takes you and rolls you and throws you and tumbles you. You're hitting the sand, you're hitting. You don't know which way up and you just want to breathe and you might be in a spot where that is what life is doing to you, it says. Then they cried out to the Lord. And I would just like to say, just like as Hezekiah brought this letter before the Lord, that it is our opportunity, that when we find ourselves in these situations, not to be critical of our circumstances, not to blame the people around us, not to even blame our own self, but recognize that this is an opportunity God is giving

us, to cry out to the Lord, to plead with him.

And if he doesn't answer, then his ways are higher than ours and he has something of higher value for us than taking the sliver out. And that's to see a part of God's face that you have never seen before. So if you are in those situations, all I could say is Jesus is he is there at God's right hand, pleading for us. Bring your things to God. Lay them out, I would say, in private, in a place that is purposeful and meaningful.

If you need someone with you to help you carry the load, then bring them someone who can take that letter with you and bring it before God. It's been my experience as a stupid, foolish young man, that God answers that prayer. It's been my experience as a tremendously wicked, no excuse, sinful individual, that God does not turn me away in my wickedness. It's my experience that in a tremendously difficult physical situations, that God does not turn down my prayer just because things are so bad. It's been my experience after 25 years that being a foolish sinner, involving myself in things that are too big for me, that God hears my cry.

And I would just encourage you that if you're there, present your request purposely before God, knowing not only that God cares for you, but Jesus is there to bear it for you, that he has paid that cost for you. Let's pray. Oh, Father Lord, we do come to you, Lord. I want more than anything, Lord, to ask that you would stamp on our beings the opportunities you give us. Disguised as foolishness, disguised as sin, disguised as difficulties, Lord, that we would look up and instead of seeing a cloudy face, see your face shining.

Oh, Lord, I just ask for that in Jesus name, amen.