

**Message #76 of *Scripture Beneath The Surface***  
***“Rebellion Against God's Authority - Part 1”***

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Hello! Thanks for being with us. Today I'd like to talk about authority, what it is, and what it isn't. Authority is bantered around the church today in a loose term which is not necessarily defined in this current day and age by scripture, but in many circumstances it is defined by church tradition. But authority in the earth is a concept which starts at the top of the spectrum. At the top of our authority system is God. He is the supreme authority in the earth. And, as such, he must be obeyed. In Romans 13, starting with verse one, we have a general explanation of the concept of authority. Of course, we will have to look closely at these verses, or we will miss the implications.

First of all, let me read Romans 13:1. It says, “Let every soul be subject to the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God.” This verse clearly defines the origination of power and rulership. There is no power but that which comes from God, and the powers that exist in this world only exist because God authorizes them to exist. This very basic concept of power in our world must be understood completely in order to understand our responsibility to God. In everything, in every circumstance in our lives, we are subject to powers. In every conceivable way we are at the mercy of those powers which are greater than our own power. God is the ultimate power over all things. He is Almighty God. He is stronger than any other force in our known existence, or even that which will come by our future knowledge of things in heavenly places. God is the power which rules over all things and all people. He is supreme. He is Lord of all.

Yes, I know, this seems to be just basic Bible doctrine. Yet, unless we recognize this basic building block of the absolute power of God, we will not comprehend the implications of evil power by which our world operates. We must realize that these other forms of power in the earth only exist because God authorizes them to exist. The concept of authority is as of such great importance that it actually compares with God himself. The whole concept of God from our aspect of him being an Almighty God requires that there is no power that exists that will detour God from being supreme. If there is any power that will prohibit God from being supreme, then we would be in a lot of trouble.

Just imagine yourself getting into a situation which threatened to cause you considerable distress. Think of your worst fears or nightmares. Imagine what you would do if you were in a situation which was so stressful you even react fearfully just by thinking about it. In my case, I suppose my greatest earthly fear is claustrophobia. This is a fear of tight places. Most things don't bother me, but the thought of getting stuck in a very narrow confining dirt filled tunnel with my head in a downward position is something that I don't even like to contemplate. Just the thought of this gruesome picture, if dwelled on for more than just a moment or two, begins to give me a physical feeling of panic. If you have ever experienced panic, then you also can understand the concept of being in a situation where there was no one to help. And my point is this. When you experience panic, it is a most horrendous feeling. It is at this time, however, that we can fully appreciate a supreme God who can always help us, no matter what the occasion.

Now, consider this. Would you ever want to be brought to a place of panic by a greater power than God? Or, to say it in another way, would you like to serve a god who could not deliver you from your most horrendous feeling? If you choose to serve any other god except the God of heaven, than you are putting yourself in jeopardy. If you choose to serve any other god except the Almighty God, then what will you do when your luck runs out? What will you do when your greatest fears come upon you?

The element of fear is not necessarily a bad thing. Through fear of danger we comprehend the concept of safety. Through fear of death we understand the blessing of life. Through fear of imprisonment we understand deliverance. And, by the fear of hell we understand the joy of heaven. God is valuable to us. Without him we will eventually succumb to mental and or physical stresses beyond our control. Yet, it is only, and listen carefully to what I'm saying, it is only by the supreme authority of God that we can trust for deliverance in each and every possible situation. It is only by a authority of the Almighty God that we can have hope to live forever in a state of unending joy and happiness.

Therefore, God's authority is to be greatly desired, for without it we have no eternal hope. Without God's supreme authority, the only hope we can have is for temporary security until such time as we are overcome by our greatest fears. It is God's authority that we love so much because of the security it brings to us. Therefore, authority is not something that we should reject, as long as it is the authority of God.

However, there is authority which is ordained of God, and there is also authority which is usurped. To usurp authority means to take that authority to yourself by the strength of your own hands, rather than receiving it by God's decree. This does not mean that all authority is used appropriately. Anyone can easily recognize that Satan has authority in this present world to tempt man. Satan could not even do this if God did not allow it. However, just because God allows anyone, including Satan, to have authority, does not mean that the person in authority uses that authority by doing righteousness. There are many people in this world that God has allowed to be authorities over others that use their authority unrighteously. However, even their evil works are allowed by God for the purpose that righteousness should ultimately reign on the earth. Through sin comes the knowledge of evil. But, through the knowledge of evil comes the knowledge of righteousness. This is expressed simply in the book of Genesis where it tells us that Eve was tempted to eat, not from the tree of the knowledge of good, but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Until sin entered into the world, there was no knowledge in man of good and evil.

It's important to recognize that the initial sin of mankind, as well as all sins which followed, all stem from the basic root of sin which Satan committed against God. The sin of Adam and Eve and also of Satan, was disobedience to the authority of God. In fact, every sin which has been committed has always been a sin of disobedience to God's authority. In essence, Genesis explains to us that mankind followed the example of Satan and rebelled against the authority of God. When God says, "Thou shalt not," then God's word has been established. His preference has been made known. Because he was, is, and forever will be the supreme authority of heaven and earth, then any resistance to his will is a sin. It is rebellion against God.

Rebellion, is described in the Bible as being equal to the sin of witchcraft. This is found in 1 Samuel 15:23, and is referring to the sin of King Saul in his disobedience to God's directive concerning the possessions of the Amalekites. This verse says, "For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, he has also rejected you from being king."

King Saul had rebelled. It was a sin which was equal to witchcraft, because the craft of witches is to operate in power and authority that did not come from God. King Saul's sin was rebellion. Although he was allowed to have authority as King of Israel, he was not given authority to perform his role of kingship by his own determination. He disobeyed God. He refused to accept God's ways, and chose to do it his own way. This act of rebellion is the central concept of sin. The act of disobedience to God's authority is the basis for all evil. When Satan rebelled against the supreme authority of God, desiring to exalt himself above the throne of God, sin was established. When this same example of rebellion occurred in the Garden of Eden, sin entered into the world. Clearly, the authority of God is needed to deliver us from harm, but rebellion against that authority only ensures our ultimate destruction, for God will not deliver us if we refuse to make him Lord. His power comes to deliver us when we authorize him to do so. When we look to our own strength, then he will allow us to do so.

Yet, do we really comprehend fully how important it is to submit ourselves to God's authority? Do we really understand what it means to accept God's will for our lives instead of trying to do it our way? The authority of God must stand, not only in the heavens, not only in the earth, but the authority of God must stand in our hearts. We call ourselves Christians, which is supposed to mean those who live in Christ. Just as the people of Thessalonica were called Thessalonians, and the people of Philippi were called Philippians, the people of Christ are called Christians. What we are called designates where we live. If you are truly a Christian, you live in Christ. In addition to this, he lives in you. However, you cannot live in him and he cannot live in you if you live in one location and he lives in another. God lives in the kingdom of heaven.

If you live in the kingdom of heaven, then notice that it is a kingdom that you live in. A kingdom has a King. You call Jesus Christ your king, and he certainly is king of all kings. Yet, if you rebel against his authority, then he is not your king in your own mind, for you are not looking to him as ruler over you.

If you are in a state of rebellion, and you have refused to honor God's purpose and direction for your life, then the city you live in is not the city of God, but a city of wickedness. If you are in rebellion against the will of God for your life, then you are living in Great Babylon.

Just as Jerusalem is referred to on earth as the city of God, and all of God's children find their true home there, Babylon is referred to in scripture as the city of wickedness. In Old Testament scripture, Babylon was one of the very first cities. It was in Babylon where the people built a tower that exemplified Satan's quest for power. Isaiah 14:12-14, tells us that Satan rejected God as the supreme authority, and determined to lift himself up to the level of God, to be like the most high. This was demonstrated by the people of earth in the early days after the flood, who gathered themselves together and determined to lift themselves up to heaven by the strength of their own hands. Although God had instructed them to go forth on the earth to multiply and replenish the earth, they chose to do it their own way, building a tower which was intended to reach heaven. Such a puny attempt, yet such great rebellion. And this rebellion at the Tower of Babel has become the Bible's symbolic reference as a location, a city, where people dwell on the earth who are in rebellion against God. Those who rebel against God's will for their lives are symbolically described as living in Great Babylon.

This is not to be taken lightly by Christians. Many people, who consider themselves followers of Christ, live today in that spiritual city of Great Babylon. This is borne out by scripture which calls for God's people to come out of Great Babylon. Isaiah 48:20 refers to this where it says, "Go forth out of Babylon, flee from the Chaldeans, with a voice of singing declare and tell this, utter it even to the end of the earth; say, The LORD has redeemed his servant Jacob." Also in Jeremiah 50:8 it says, "Remove yourself from out of the midst of Babylon, and go forth out of the land of the Chaldeans, and be as the he goats before the flocks." Now, let me read Jeremiah 51, verses 6, 45, and 49. These three verses say, "Flee out of the midst of Babylon, and deliver every man his soul: be not cut off in her iniquity; for this is the time of the LORD'S vengeance; he will render unto her a recompense. 45 My people, go out of the midst of her, and deliver

every man his soul from the fierce anger of the LORD. 49 As Babylon has caused the slain of Israel to fall, so at Babylon shall fall the slain of all the earth.”

Now, these scriptures are from the Old Testament, and some people would think this concept of God's people fleeing from Babylon doesn't apply to Christians. But let's read Revelation 18:4, and we will see that even in the New Testament church there is this same instruction to God's people to come out of Babylon. Revelation 18:4 says, “And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that you not be partakers of her sins, and that you receive not of her plagues.” Notice that God is saying that, “His people” should come out of Great Babylon. It isn't just the wicked who are in Great Babylon, but God is calling to his people to come out of Great Babylon in order to escape the coming judgment of this great wicked spiritual city where wickedness reigns. Also, one more scripture from Zechariah 2:6-7. It says, “Ho, ho, come forth, and flee from the land of the north, says the LORD: for I have spread you abroad as the four winds of the heaven, says the LORD. 7 Deliver yourself, O Zion, that dwells with the daughter of Babylon.”

Yes, living in the spiritual realm of Great Babylon will be devastating in the great and terrible Day of the Lord. We must not be found there when our Lord comes back to earth. But how do we make certain we are not found there? Just as rebellion against God's supreme authority is the central sin of Satan, rebellion against God's authority is at the center of any wickedness on earth. If we rebel, we will be the enemy of God. And if we rebel in part, we will not be pleasing to God in that thing in which we rebel.

Yet, so little understanding exists in the church today when it comes to recognizing God's will for his people. Scriptures abound as to God's desire for how his people should worship him, and how they should order their lives for him. We are in this earth only at the pleasure of God. To live in this world in opposition to his will is wickedness. But the question isn't whether or not we want to rebel, for all true Christians do want to please God. However, Christians have been deceived into thinking we can live our lives on earth in a manner which is fitting to us, and assuming that if we do, then it must be automatically acceptable in the sight of God. But we are not called to make our own rules, or to live our lives according to our own understanding. We must accept God's word as our standard, and then also look for specific understanding for our own lives. We have the written word, the Bible, as a reference book. And through the power of the Holy Spirit, by prayer and supplication to God, we can receive understanding of God's will for our lives.

But many Christians do not search for the understanding of God's will. In scripture there are many instances of God giving explicit directions which Christians should observe. In the Old Testament the directions for temple worship were very plain, and the people were commanded to observe the Lord's directions specifically, and not to vary these commands in the least. It is not really so difficult for Christians to see this concept in the Old Testament. We can easily recognize that God wanted the Children of Israel to obey his commands exactly as he commanded them. But it is quite another matter for Christians to comprehend the same concept

in today's New Testament scripture. The laws of God are no longer given to us in tablets of stone, as was the Ten Commandments. In today's New Testament Covenant we have the writings of Peter, Paul, Matthew, John, and others which give us a written form of God's desire for us. But it is in the fleshy tablets of our heart where the pure direction is found. Yet, if we do not seek earnestly for the truth, we will not understand it. We will not see the complete will of God without praying earnestly for it.

In the New Testament, God does not spell out every tiny bit of detail. However, the scriptures do give us the general theme of his will, and when we see something in scripture which indicates the will of God, we must seek him for understanding. So many times the Christian church is found to lack understanding of God's will because they read the word of God without seeking for the understanding. There is significant cause for alarm if Christians do not do this. Of course, you can't seek for understanding for a concept which has not been presented to you first, in the sense that you cannot study a subject until the subject is presented. But we have the Bible to give us the subjects of study. And, if we read the Bible, but ignore indications of God's will just because they are not easily understood, then we will never come into the place of true service to God.

And I'm assuming that most of you who are listening to this are Christians, and that you truly do want to serve the Lord with all your heart, all your soul, and with all your strength. And if you do, then the Bible passages which imply God's will in our observances and in our service should not be ignored just because we don't easily understand them. God has not made the Bible as a plain Jane book, but has made the Bible to be understood only by those who truly do seek him for the understanding. And the reason for this is that God does not want the wicked people to understand his will, for as Jesus said in Matthew 13:13-15, "Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they, seeing, do not see; and hearing, they hear not, neither do they understand. 14 And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah, which says, By hearing you shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing you shall see, and shall not perceive: 15 For these people's hearts have become thick, and their ears are dull of hearing, and they have closed their eyes; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them."

God has not given the wicked understanding, for they do not love him with all their heart, all their soul, and with all their strength. And, if you are happy with just being a moderate Christian and have no desire to serve him explicitly according to his word, then you do not love him with all your heart, all your soul, and with all your strength. In short, you are living in a state of rebellion, for you have resisted his will as he has attempted to reveal it to you in his word. But rebellion against God ceases when you finally throw yourself at his feet and give all of yourself to him. Rebellion ceases when you become willing to let him determine your course of life instead of setting your own boundaries and goals. It is God who's will we are here to fulfill, not our own will. We were called to be sojourners in this world, as strangers in a strange land where we are just passing through. We were not meant to settle down and put up walls and build great cities. We were meant to be a people of God who's only purpose on this earth is to serve the God of heaven. If we ignore scripture, and treat the word of God as if it is not important enough to

seek for the understanding, then we have become as city dwellers who have forsaken our sojourner ways in exchange for comforts which please ourselves instead of being pleasing to God.