**By What Authority (6) – Moral Authority**

*Luke 20:1-8*

**Introduction**

1. The question posed by the Jewish leaders to Jesus shows the importance of authority – **Luke 20:1-8**
   1. Previously:
      1. **The Need for Authority** – implied by their question, and Jesus’ response.
         1. Need for authority shown – secular, biblical history, inherent within conversion, no authority = sin.
      2. **The Source of Authority** – implied by their question, and Jesus’ response.
         1. Improper sources of authority demonstrated – from men.
         2. Proper source of authority demonstrated – God, Christ, HS through apostles, written word.
      3. **Establishing Authority** – implied by their question (Jesus must be able to demonstrate), and reasoning to Jesus’ response regarding John the baptizer (John evidently demonstrated to others) is the ability to demonstrate authority.
         1. Command, Example, Necessary Inference – an inspired hermeneutic.
      4. **The Doctrine of Expediency** – as a subpoint to establishing authority, understanding the dual nature of authority (generic and specific). Within generic authority is the concept of Bible expediencies (something lawful which aids in carrying out a command or authorized action).
      5. **The Silence of the Scriptures** – understanding that Biblical silence does not permit. Jesus could not have responded to the Jewish rulers by saying, “God didn’t say not to.” God’s revelation is intentional, thus, his silence as well. Any conclusion reached based on His silence is presumptuous.
   2. It is imperative we understand these principles of authority on a personal/individual level. I.e. these aren’t simply governing principles of Christ’s church as a collective, but even down to the level of those individuals who comprise the church.
2. Are the principles studied and discussed throughout this series on authority applicable to the individual? Do these simply govern the work, worship, and organization of the church? When we consider our daily life – what we think, say, and do – is there a verifiable standard of morality we must identify and submit to?
   1. More simply – does any Christian (elder, preacher, teacher, “you who are spiritual” [Gal. 6:1]) have the right/obligation to bind a certain moral behavior in day to day living on another individual Christian?
   2. Are there governing laws beyond the functionality of the local church to be enforced in our daily individual lives, or are we exempt in the individual arena from any uniform, across the board standard of living?
3. There is a Moral Authority
4. The Same Authority Governing the Actions of the church (collective) Governs the Actions of the Individual
   1. **Matthew 28:18** – ***“All”*** is without limit regarding person, place, or thing.
      1. I.e. Jesus has authority over all people, in all places, and regarding all things.
      2. Truly comprehensive.
   2. Practically – **Colossians 3:17** – if Christ has comprehensive authority, then we cannot do anything without His “say so.”
      1. Includes the church – **1 Timothy 3:15; 1 Corinthians 14:34-38**
         1. Corinthians were acting as though they had a different standard than other congregations.
         2. All fall under the same umbrella of authority and must function accordingly.
         3. **Cf. Hebrews 8:5** – according to the pattern.
      2. Includes the individuals that comprise the church as they act separate from the collective whole – **Colossians 3:18-4:1** – wives, husbands, children, fathers, bondservants, masters.
         1. These are all addressing individual responsibilities that are present separate from the local congregational collective activity.
         2. The church cannot, and is not expected to, function in these ways.
   3. Not to be taken for granted:
      1. Some understand this intellectually, but don’t exhibit such in their day to day living.
         1. EX: Practical atheism – not that one doesn’t believe in God, but their lives don’t reflect such a belief – they live as though He didn’t exist.
      2. Some carry themselves as if they must be a part of a congregation that is functioning according to the authorized pattern, but they can dictate their individual lives.
5. The Authority of Christ is Demonstrated in Ways Beyond the Collectivity of the Church
   1. Meaning there are separate realms where Christ’s authority operates with equal force, though differing specific matters.
      1. Example – **James 1:27** – NOT regarding the church (collectively), but a responsibility directed at the individual Christian. (Moral requirement)
      2. Example – **1 Timothy 5:3, 8, 9-10, 16** – lists individual responsibilities (moral requirements) as separate from church responsibility.
   2. Therefore, it is just as important for us to conform to the moral standards of the New Testament within our individual lives as it is for the local church to conform to the pattern of the New Testament for the work, worship, and organization of the church.
      1. Likewise, it is equally egregious for us to disobey the authority individually than it is congregationally.
6. Moral Authority Must be Communicated
7. **2 Timothy 1:13** – QUESTION – is there a pattern to hold fast to as individuals?
   1. Often cited regarding discussions of authority concerning the church.
   2. However, it is written to an individual! – Timothy.
   3. THERE IS A PATTERN – how can we know it? How can we know what God expects of us in day-to-day life as individuals? Are we free to decide?
8. A Standard of Morality Must be Revealed to be Known
   1. **Jeremiah 10:23; Proverbs 14:12** – such a standard cannot be discovered within self.
      1. Not anymore than we could have discovered the pattern of the church within ourselves.
      2. **Cf. Hebrews 8:5** – Moses could not have discovered the pattern of the tabernacle without revelation.
   2. Our conscience is NOT that standard/pattern which governs our individual lives – **Acts 23:1** (Paul had a past of being wrong, though he lived according to conscience.)
      1. **Romans 7:7** – Paul’s understanding of the immorality of covetousness came by revelation. (Something which some would argue is innately understood to be immoral.)
      2. **Psalm 119:9** – one can cleanse his way by heeding God’s revealed word. (Not merely conscience.)
9. Moral Authority is Communicated through the Same Methodology as Any Other Divine Revelation
   1. **Titus 2:11-12** – the grace of God reveals/teaches the pattern of living.
      1. **(v. 12)** – moral descriptions.
   2. Three methods of communication God uses to show man His will (thus for man to establish authority) – command/direct statement, approved example, necessary inference.
      1. Some suggest we need one of the three for all we do as a church, but not as an individual.
         1. Such is not logical.
      2. Syllogism:
         1. We must have authority for all that we do as individuals.
         2. God communicates His will, thus authority, via command/direct statement, approved example, and necessary inference.
         3. We must have command/direct statement, approved example, or necessary inference from God’s word for all that we say and do as individuals.
   3. Example:
      1. Jesus on Marriage (not a matter concerning the church collectively, but those individuals who would marry) – **Matthew 19:3-6**
         1. **(v. 3)** – question about divorce.
         2. **(v. 4)** – example of creation. (Separate before joined.)
         3. **(v. 5)** – direct statement – the two (male and female of the example) shall become one flesh.
         4. **(v. 6)** – necessary inference – they’re not two anymore, but one flesh – not to be separated (back to what they were before what? – Marriage)
      2. Paul regarding diligence in labor, and not slothfulness – **2 Thessalonians 3:7-9** – approved example.
   4. NOTE: If sin is lawlessness (**cf. 1 John 3:4),** then even sins of immorality by an individual are violations of a revealed law. How do we know those are sinful? These principles establish such law.
10. Moral Authority Must be Submitted to and Enforced
11. The Call to Obedience Extends Beyond Collective Matters of the church
    1. Loving Neighbor vs Partiality – **James 2:8-9**
    2. Individual care for brethren – **James 2:15-17**
    3. Doing good **– James 4:17**
    4. Prohibiting consumption of alcohol – **1 Peter 4:3** (Even down to “a drinking”)
    5. Modest attire – **1 Timothy 2:9-10 (**NOTE: and defining what modest attire is – “drawing lines” so to speak – if we cannot discover the standard, then how can we possibly fulfill the command?)
    6. Sexual purity – **1 Thessalonians 4:3-4; Hebrews 13:4**
    7. Forsaking the assembly – **Hebrews 10:25** (EX: There’s nothing wrong with having this job/hobby, and it is my choice – but if it is causing a forsaking of the assembly it is not something you have authority to be involved in.)\_
12. Accountability in the Family of God Includes Matters of Individuality
    1. Sexual immorality in Corinth – **1 Corinthians 5:1**
       1. Was such a collective sin of the church? Not the sexual immorality.
       2. But they had an obligation to admonish that brother, and do something about the sin.
    2. General sin noticed in the life of an individual **– Galatians 6:1-2**
       1. Not a context of a church action of sin.
       2. Obligation to expose such sin of an individual nature.
       3. **Galatians 6:6-8** – obligation of the one being restored to fall in line with the teaching of the one restoring.
    3. **James 5:19-20** – no member of the church is free to do as he pleases even in his own individual life. There is a standard to live by, and others are obligated to restore one who has departed.

**Conclusion**

1. Discussions on Bible authority almost always pertain to the work, worship, and organization of the church.
2. However, we must also understand the authority fo the Lord on a personal level.
3. Each and everything we do from day to day must be authorized, and we must be able to verify that it is.