

Authority: Part 1

The Foundations of Authority

Brent Paschall – www.blueridgecoc.org

I. Introduction

a. Airplane in Washington DC airspace example

- i. From: “CNN.com - Intruding pilots released without charges - May 12, 2005,”
<http://www.cnn.com/2005/US/05/11/evacuation/index.html>.
- ii. Wed, May 11, 2005 – a small airplane flew into restricted airspace over Washington DC
- iii. After repeated attempts to contact the plane by radio failed, the alert level for our nations capital was raised to red
 1. The White House was evacuated, one reporter who happened to be there was told, “Run, this is no joke”
 2. The House and Senate sessions were interrupted and the Congressmen and women were removed
 3. The justices at the Supreme Court were moved to a secure location
- iv. Simultaneously, a Black Hawk helicopter and two F-16 fighter jets were sent to intercept the aircraft
 1. The two fighter jets circled the plane
 2. They fired four times, with flares to “get the pilots attention”
 3. They then forced the plane to land at an airport in Frederick, MD
- v. The pilot and a single passenger were members of a flying club in Pennsylvania who were headed to an air show in North Carolina
 1. They were released later that afternoon and will not be charged with any crime
 2. For eight minutes our capital was at its highest level of alert
- vi. If the warning flares had failed to get the pilot’s attention, the plane would have been shot down
 1. Does the government have the right to take the life of whoever was on that plane?
 2. Without a trial?
 3. What gives them that right?
 4. What other persons or institutions have the power of life and death over us, and under what conditions?

b. What is authority?

- i. When you realize that someone can take your life with impunity, you realize that you are under their authority
- ii. Authority – the power or right to give commands, enforce obedience, take action, or make final decisions; jurisdiction
- iii. Greek exousia:
 1. means: privilege, force, capacity, competency, freedom, mastery, influence;

- 2. translated: authority, power, control
- c. Three views of the source of authority:
 - i. Personal – All authority for my life resides with me and with whoever I give that authority to
 - ii. Societal – All authority for my life resides with the society I live in, which also has authority over each of its members
 - iii. Divine – All authority for my life resides with a Supreme Being, who also has authority over all things
- d. God has total authority over everything, and we are responsible to submit to that authority
- II. What gives God that authority? God has total authority over us (Acts 17:24-31) because:
 - a. He made us (v 24, 26-27, 29)
 - i. Like the parent who says, “I brought you into this world, and I can take you out again”
 - b. He sustains us (v 25, 28) – we are dependent every second for our existence on what He provides
 - i. Like government roads – we depend on them for transportation, so we must submit to whatever rules or conditions are placed on their use
 - c. He has judged us (v 30-31) (Suspended death sentence)
 - i. Like Wesley in the Princess Bride – captured by the dread pirate Roberts, pled for his life, was offered the job of valet, his master would say each evening, “Good work, Rest well, I’ll most likely kill you in the morning”
 - d. He has saved us (2Cor. 5:14-15)
 - i. Like Robinson Crusoe who saved Friday from being slaughtered by cannibals, Friday lay flat on the ground before him and put Crusoe foot on his head to let him know that he was putting himself totally under his control in exchange for Crusoe saving his life
 - e. The limits of God’s authority:
 - i. He does not force us to willingly obey Him [in areas where He has delegated authority to us]
- III. Responding to God’s authority
 - a. Ignoring it – by living as though authority resides with us or with human society
 - b. Denying it – by denying His making of us, His concern with us, or His right to judge us
 - c. Perverting it – by changing God’s commands to fit our desires, by representing our opinions as the commands of God
 - d. Undermining it – by casting doubt on God’s goodness, by criticizing His works and ways
 - e. Rebelling against it – acknowledging God’s rule and then disobeying it
 - f. Grudgingly submit to it –
 - i. To avoid punishment

- ii. To get what we want
 - g. Voluntarily submit to it – giving God the one thing he cannot take for Himself (James 4:6-7)
 - i. Validates His Goodness
 - ii. Acknowledges not just His authority, but also His great mercy and love
 - iii. Only way to benefit from our relationship with God
- IV. What does it mean to have total authority? God's total authority gives Him the right to:
 - a. Command us (Matt. 8:1-10)
 - b. Put others in authority over us (Jn. 12:48-49)
 - c. Order our lives according to His purposes (Acts 1:6-8)
 - d. Judge us (Jn. 5:26-27)
 - e. Bless or Curse us (Rom. 2:9-10)
 - f. Save or Condemn us (Lk. 12:4-5)
 - g. Destroy or Preserve us (Jn. 17:1-2; Matt. 28:18-20)
- V. A proper understanding of the foundations of authority will:
 - a. Make us appreciate just being alive
 - b. Make us want to be the type of person God wants us to be
 - c. Make us desire to see others voluntarily compliant with God's will
 - d. Lead us to accept God's will, without consideration of our own will, desire, or reasoning