

RESPECT FOR AUTHORITY

A major problem in the world today is a lack of respect for authority. Many families have been destroyed because either the husband, the wife or both did not have a proper respect for God's commands regarding the home. The Bible teaches, "wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord" (Eph. 5:22) and husbands are to love and protect their wives "even as Christ also loved the Church, and gave Himself for it" (Eph. 5:25). Lack of respect for authority has caused many divisions within the Lord's Body as well. The mechanical instrument of music was introduced into worship because of a lack of respect for the authority of the Bible (Col. 3:16; Eph. 5:19). Women were placed into positions of leadership because of a lack of respect for the authority of the Bible. Paul, by inspiration, wrote, "Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence" (1 Tim. 2:11-12). Missionary societies grew out of a lack of respect for the authority of the Bible. Man has no authority to build earthly institutions to do the work of benevolence. God gave the charge of benevolence to His Church, a Divine Institution (Gal. 6:10). Anything that man does, teaches, or enacts which contradicts or seeks to replace that which God has already authorized is sinful.

God gave all power and authority, both in Heaven and on Earth, to His Son, Jesus Christ (Mat. 28:18). Therefore, "whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him" (Col. 3:17). In the home, authority was delegated to men. "The husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the Church" (Eph. 5:23). In the Church, God authorized elders (i.e. men who attain to Scriptural qualifications recorded in 1 Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-9; and 1 Peter 5:1-3) to make decisions concerning the local congregation which they oversee. Faithful elders are to be honored and given our utmost appreciation for the high responsibilities they have undertaken (1 Tim. 5:17). Since these men have been given authority, by God, to make decisions regarding the local congregation, any attempt to disobey, rebel, add to or take away from a decision made by the elders is a sin against the Most High God. In congregations without qualified men to serve as elders, the faithful, Christian men of that congregation must ensure that the congregation is overseen as efficiently and as effectively as possible in accordance with God's Will (cf. 1 Tim. 3:1; 1 Tim. 2:12). Refusing to respect the authority of decisions made by those men would be just as sinful as rejecting the authority of a faithful eldership and is therefore a rejection of God.

Rejecting those given authority by God is a rejection of God, Himself. When the leaders of Israel came to Samuel and said, "make us a king to judge us like all the nations" (1 Sam. 8:5), God quickly pointed out to Samuel that, "they have not rejected thee, but *they have rejected Me*, that I should not reign over them" (1 Sam. 8:7, emphasis B.G.). In what is commonly called the limited commission, Jesus sent His disciples out "to preach the kingdom of God, and to heal the sick" (Luke 9:2). In this commission, Jesus instructed, "whosoever will not receive you, when ye go out of that city, shake off the very dust from your feet for a testimony against them" (Luke 9:5). The dust would serve as testimony or witness that they had opportunity to hear and obey the Word of God. They therefore had no excuse for disobedience. By rejecting those who preached God's Word, they also rejected God. Jesus also states, "he that receiveth you receiveth

Me, and he that receiveth Me receiveth Him that sent Me” (Mat. 10:40). “He that rejecteth Me,” Jesus says, “and receiveth not My words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day” (John 12:48).

Let us respect and love God enough to do as He commands. “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep His commandments: for this is the whole duty of man” (Ecc. 12:13). Let us respect the authority of the Christ, Who is “before all things, and by Him all things consist. And He is the head of the Body, the Church” (Col. 1:17-18). Let us respect God’s Laws regarding the home and let us respect the authority given to God’s elders (or the faithful men of the congregation) who make decisions for the local congregation by adhering to and following those decisions.

- *Brad Green*