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Series 2. Understanding the Church

Episode 7. Authority and Power & The Case for Women

We see at work in the Church are those two forceful capabilities associated with all kingdoms: **authority** and **power**. Whether it is the Kingdom of God, the kingdom of Satan, or the kingdoms of the world, all retain the same two forces to make laws and enforce obedience in order to influence and control its citizens; and all too often attempts to conquer other kingdoms. On the earth nations war against other nations and in the heavenly realm the Kingdom of God is at a great war with the devil and his kingdom; it all had its origin long ago in heaven. Proper understanding of the nature and function of both **authority** and **power** in the Church is essential, as well as the role of gender.

In the last episode a distinction was made between the role and function of those considered *elders* in the Church and that of *ministries*. The central issue involves that of **authority** in the Church. Elders are set into place to govern the Church, to oversee it, keep it safe, secure the doctrine, and concern themselves with the general well-being of the Church. On the other

hand, the primary function of *ministries* is to serve the Church in various ways, to exercise spiritual *power* in the Church, to pastor, teach, guide, lead, establish, and edify (or build up).

And so we see at work in the Church are those two forceful capabilities associated with all kingdoms: **authority** and **power**. Whether it is the Kingdom of God, the kingdom of Satan, or the kingdoms of the world, all retain the same two forces to make laws and enforce obedience in order to influence and control its citizens, and all too often attempts to conquer other kingdoms. On the earth nations war against other nations, and in the heavenly realm the Kingdom of God is at a great war with the devil and his kingdom; it all had its origin long ago in heaven,

Rev. 12.7-9 *“7And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer. 8So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.”*

1 Jn. 3.8 *“For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.”*

And so this duo of forces, *authority* and *power*, is an integral part of all that is going on since the beginning of time both in heaven and upon the earth. *Authority* and *power* are also an essential component of the Church that touches upon every soul every day of his or her life. Much can be said about the devil and his kingdom of demon's warfare against God and the Church and of their final demise and condemnation into the *“lake of fire and brimstone... where they will be tormented night and day for ever and ever.* (Rev.20.10) But the focus for now must remain on the Church, and on that *authority* and *power* that works both “upon it” and “within it.”

Authority and Power

Authority means having the right to act as you see fit, to give orders, and to expect obedience. Nowhere in heaven or upon the earth does one have the liberty just to do as one pleases. This is how it all started in the Garden of Eden when Adam and Eve decided to eat of the forbidden fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Even a recluse living in the wilderness, whether acknowledged or not, is under the influence of spiritual authorities: God and/or the devil.

Power means the capability to act, to be able to do something. It is having the might, strength, and force to do or enforce authority. God expelled Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden following their disobedience, Gn. 3.24 *“So He drove out the man; and He placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life.”* Thus He was enforcing His authority. A policeman's *authority* is in his badge that shows he is acting under a higher government authority; his weapon is the *power* he uses to enforce the law.

In the Book of Esther, the account is given of how the highest prince, Haman, persuaded King Ahasuerus to kill all the Jews in the Persian Empire. (Est. 3.413) Using his *authority*, the King wrote out a decree to annihilate all Jews and sent it out to the local governments in every province. He sealed the document with wax and imprinted the wax with his signet ring—which is the symbol of his *authority* as King of Persia. No one but designated people dared break this seal for it came from the highest and most powerful authority in the land; King Ahasurus had a vast well-equipped army of over 100,000 soldiers, which represented the *power* of the King to enforce his will.

In regards to the Church, Christ has been given all *authority* and *power* when God the Father raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand on heaven's throne; He then gave Jesus Christ to be the Head of the Church, as it is written, in Eph. 1. 19-23,

“19and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power 20which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, 21far above all principality and power and 22might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come.

22And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, 23which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.”

As it has been written in the previous episode in this series of Understanding the Church, Christ's *authority* over the Church is allocated to the Church *elders* who are set into place to oversee and govern the Church. They make important decisions, define the doctrine, identify false prophets and teachers, feed the flock, and when called for, administer discipline. Jesus' *power* in the Church is invested in the *ministries* He ordains through the power of the Holy Spirit. This power is in keeping with His promise to the Church upon His resurrection from the dead but prior to His ascension into Heaven. Lk. 24.49.

“49Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high.” And,

Acts 1.4-5 “4And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, “which,” He said, “you have heard from Me; 5for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.”

Only ten days later, with some 120 disciples gathered together, the Holy Spirit fell upon the Church, Acts 2.1-4,

“1When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. 2And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. 3Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. 4And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

The presence of the indwelling Holy Spirit is an enabling power that works within the believer, Phil. 2.13 “*13for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.*” This is a working within the heart that transforms our souls, and a working in the Church to rise up

ministries and administer spiritual gifts. [I hope to address these ministries and gifts of the Spirit in the following episode.]

Ministries transcend all differences in gender, race, wealth, education, and class; for they are spiritual in nature. God anoints and sets into place in the Church whom He will to function in various ways of service for the building up of the Church. However, the same cannot be said for those placed into the Church in positions of *authority*, such as elders who also walk in ministries of pastors and teachers. The Bible is quite clear about how *authority* is not evenly and equally distributed but exists in hierarchy form. 1 Cor. 11.3, “*But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.*”

Christ is seen as equal with God in *power* but not in *authority*. While in His earthly ministry, Christ even emptied Himself of this *power* coming under both the *authority* and *power* of the Holy Spirit, as it is written, Phil. 2.6-7 “*who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men,*” and, Jn. 10.30 “*I and the Father are one.*”

However, when it comes to *authority*, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was obedient to the Father and acknowledged that the Father was greater (in authority). Jn. 14.28, “*You have heard Me say to you, ‘I am going away and coming back to you.’ If you loved Me, you would rejoice because I said, ‘I am going to the Father,’ for My Father is greater than I.* And again, Jn.14.10 “*The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own (authority); but the Father who dwells in Me does the works.*”

Weakness in the Flesh

The natural flesh of man is weak; it is subject to hunger and thirst, pain and suffering, death and decay. Jesus Christ was both the Son of God in Spirit and the Son of Man in flesh. He was eternally linked to the Father in Spirit, but in the flesh linked to man and subject to all the weaknesses of the flesh. In His weakness, He was crucified on the cross, died and was buried. (2 Cor. 13.4) However, Christ’s soul was not left in hades nor did His body see corruption, as Peter declared on the Day of Pentecost, Acts 2.29-33,

“²⁹Men and brethren, let me speak freely to you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. ³⁰Therefore, being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his body, according to the flesh, He would raise up the Christ to sit on his throne, ³¹he, foreseeing this, spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ, that His soul was not left in Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption. ³²This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses. ³³Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear.”

Being spiritually saved, and our souls being presently saved, the bodies of believers are still unsaved, still in need of redemption. Rm. 8.23 “*we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body.*” Even though this will come in the resurrection at the return of Christ, we are at present still limited and hampered by these fleshly bodies. As our spirits crave heavenly things, our bodies crave worldly things, often with strong enticements. This weakness is a principal reason for authority.

Though men and women are considered spiritually equal before God, they are by nature uniquely created quite differently. There are many differences between men and women including: obvious biological differences including body chemistry (men have 5 to 10 times more testosterone than women); brain and psychological differences in the way thoughts and emotions are processed, how men are more logical, analytical, and rational and women more intuitive, holistic and creative; and there are behavioral and social differences where women tend to be more linked to the immediate family, caring for its needs, supportive of the man, and embodying selflessness and self-sacrifice, whereas men traditionally include being the bread winner, leader, and protector of the family. These of course are broad generalizations with unique variation.

Thus, God has ordained men and women to function differently in the family and society; they are created to fulfill different roles. It was not until more recent history that societies have attempted to blur the differences between men and women, advocating equality (equality as defined by society not by God) even to the grotesque and mutilating sex change operations aided by chemicals. As a society, we are entering into the most dangerous and self-destructive practice of usurping God's *authority* and *power* and replacing it with that which comes from eating of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, that is, man deciding for himself good and evil.

All of that being said, let us now focus on *authority* and *power* and how it relates to gender in the Church.

The Case for Women in The Church

What we are about to discuss here regards *authority* in the Church and not *power* as expressed in anointed ministries. Although women have always functioned in spiritual *power* within the Church, such as functioning as prophetesses, in gifts of the Spirit in healing and miracles, tongues and interpretation of tongues, etc., the question arises of the nature of women and spiritual *authority* in the Church.

A Bible scholar has written in a Bible commentary, "Reading through Scripture, a few passages stand out that directly speak to the role of women in the church: 1 Corinthians 11:3-12, 14:34-35, 1 Timothy 2:11-15 and Titus 1, 2. These passages are the foundation for the conclusion that women cannot be lead pastors in churches," and another scholar writes, "ordinary teaching by the woman is a usurpation of authority over the man, who is the head, which the apostle also forbade in 1 Corinthians 11.3." Let's briefly look into these statements and examine their validity a little more closely in an attempt to understand the role of women in the Church.

The apostle Paul revealed the spirit of Christ regarding the overall purpose and function of women in the Church. He elevated women from the position of being of lessor value and intellectual inferiority they had occupied under various pagan systems of the day, and still are today. He taught that women were fellow heirs with men of all the glory and honor and life in the Kingdom of God, where gender was not a determining factor for the grace of God, that they too are, "*blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.* (Eph. 1.3) But while teaching this great truth, Paul also shows the woman's proper sphere of influence in the natural; due to creative differences, man's work and duties are largely in the busy world outside, the woman's work is most largely confined to the home. Remembering these two

factors, that men and women are distinctively created to serve different purposes, and that we are still in these unredeemed bodies yet subject to worldly influences and deception, these thoughts may now be transferred to life within the Church.

There is perhaps no more hotly debated issue in the Church today than that of women serving as pastors, teachers, and elders. What is most important to understand is that this decision is not based upon the reasonings of society, culture, or intellectualism, but its only basis must lie in Biblical interpretation and Godly wisdom. The central issue is where authority lies within the Church as ordained by God, and the idea of usurping this authority.

Adam and Eve usurped the *authority* of God when they decided for themselves to eat of the forbidden fruit. They reasoned within themselves, “*the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise.*” (Gn, 3.6) Israel usurped God’s authority when they made the molten image plated with gold and worshipped it. The Pharisees constantly usurped the *authority* of God by imbedding the Law with countless numbers of man-made ordinances and rituals. Today, in the Church, man usurps the *authority* of God by redefining sin, tolerance, and judgment and opening its doors to all sorts of evil and goings on contrary to the Word of God. It is sin to usurp God’s authority.

Though Jesus was tempted in His flesh in numerous ways, forgoing sleep, food, water, comfort, and mental anguish, He never once usurped the Father’s *authority*, but said “*The Father has not left Me alone, for I always do those things that please Him.*” Jn. 8.29 He is also quoted as saying, “*It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.’*” Mt. 4.4 He lived a life of submission and obedience to His Heavenly Father.

As noted earlier, the Word of God proclaims, 1 Tim. 2.11-12 “***11Let a woman learn in silence with all submission. 12And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence.***” He then cites Eve, who being of a distinct creative nature than Adam, was deceived and fell into transgression—thus sin entered the world. It is in the nature of things where one is weak, another is strong, where one lacks discernment, another is given keen intuition, where one lacks understanding, another is given wisdom. Men and women must find the truth, that they complement one another, that each one is incomplete without the other, and that each is set into the Church to serve and function in different ways— just as in the family household. Here, greatness is not defined by authority but by obedience to the Word of God,

Note that it is written above, “*I do not permit...*” God is working and speaking through Paul restricting women from serving in the Church in any role of authority, which includes not only publically teaching, but also pastoring, ministry as an apostle, and as a Church elder. Walking in any of these roles is exercising oversight and spiritual authority in the Church.

There are many objections to this view of women in authoritative positions. But in all cases it is reasoning and intellectual excuses that are used to object—whereas reasoning and intellectualism are realms of the soul and not of the spirit; the spirit responds to the Word of God by faith. This decision has nothing to do with the educational level of first century women, because worldly educational achievement is irrelevant in spiritual matters. For

example, my first spiritual father in Christ was a simple farmer; while I held a Ph.D., he only had an eighth-grade education, yet he was anointed with the Word of God.

Another objection is that Paul was actually referring only to *husbands* and *wives* and not to men and women in general. This is because the same Greek words are used for both, and it is a matter of interpretation and understanding how its use is used in different passages. However, the context here is definitely within the Church. One more argument is the example of some women in the Old Testament who were set into positions of authority in Israel, for example, Miriam, Deborah, and Huldah. However, the authority of women in the Old Testament is not relevant to issues in the New Testament Church. The Old Testament functioned in the natural as a religious organization with designated offices, commandments, and rituals whereas the New Testament presents an entirely new concept of the Church, functioning spiritually as the Body of Christ involving an authority structure unique to the Church. As it is written in Heb. 8,13 *“In that He says, “A new covenant,” He has made the first obsolete. Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.*

Many women excel in ministries of explaining to others the essential of the Gospel of Christ, particularly women and children (Titus 2.3-5), in evangelism and missionary work, as prayer warriors, leading worship, in hospitality and helps in many different ways in the Body of Christ. Being supportive and complementary to men who serve the Church in authoritative ministries is critical wherein they offer prayer support, discernment, counsel, and Godly wisdom in their intuitive understanding of things. Women enter freely without restriction in exercising the gifts of the Holy Spirit. The giftings of the Holy Spirit vary widely and include but not limited to: (key passages found in Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12, and Ephesians 4)

Prophecy: The ability to receive and proclaim a message from God.

Healing: The miraculous power to cure illness and restore health.

Wisdom: The gift of making wise decisions and giving counsel according to God's will.

Knowledge: The ability to understand spiritual issues and circumstances.

Tongues: The ability to pray, worship, and/or speak in an unknown tongue.

The Interpretation of Tongues: The spiritual ability to understand and interpret prophesy given in an unknown tongue.

Miracles: To display signs and wonders that give credibility to the Gospel.

Discernment of Spirits: to recognize if something, some teaching, or someone is truly from God.

Helps: The talent to faithfully serve others and help in their needs, often behind the scenes.

Teaching: The capability to explain to others the essentials of the Gospel accurately and apply its lessons to life.

Encouragement: Offering comfort, motivation, and reassurance to others.

Giving: The readiness to give resources with generosity and cheerfulness.

Administration: The aptitude for managing the organizational affairs of the Church.

Mercy: Showing deep empathy and compassion for the suffering and needy.

Faith: Exhibiting exceptionally strong trust in God and His promises, inspiring others.

The subject of ministries and gifts of the Holy Spirit will be discussed in the following episode.

S2.E7. Questions for Discussion

1. Explain the meaning of the words *authority* and *power*. Give an example of how they are used in kingdoms.
2. Explain the significance of Lk. 24.49 “49*Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high.*” How does it apply specifically to the Church? To members in the Church?
3. Discuss the difference between *authority* and *power* within the Church; what is the role of elders? What is the relationship between power and various ministries in the Church, the Body of Christ?
4. Describe how men and women differ in their creative natures. How is this reflective in the family? In the Church?
5. Describe to role of women in the Church regarding *authority* and *power*. Cite relevant scriptures.