



The Grace Proclamator and Promulgator

“To testify the gospel of the grace of God.” Acts 20:24

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CHURCH AUTHORITY: LIMITED AND SPECIFIC

By Eld. Royce Smith

TEXTS: *Matthew 28:18-20 And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. 19 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: 20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.*

Mark 13:34 For the Son of man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch.

INTRODUCTION

As you know, the Church of Rome claims for itself what belongs to Christ only: absolute authority. It is therefore especially disturbing when those who call themselves “Baptists” claim that Christ’s absolute authority has been transferred to the church. My texts know nothing of such a transfer as I shall demonstrate in this message.

I have heard some advocate what seemed to be absolute church authority for many years. There are even those who refer to the “sovereignty” of the church. The church is not and can never be sovereign if it is subject to the (See CHURCH AUTHORITY Cont. Top of P. 9)

WHO IS THE LORD THAT I SHOULD OBEY HIM?

By Wayne Camp

Turn with me to the Book of Exodus, Chapter 5, verses 1 through 9. While you are turning there I will give you a little bit of the background of this message. When Brother Galaviz was here he dealt with some of the area that I will be dealing with this morning. At the same time at home I was working on a lesson for Thailand on Typology, and I was covering this particular area, and I believe that the next Wednesday night some of the things I will be saying about Sennacherib Brother Lee touched on. So, I got the idea of preaching this sermon while Bro Galaviz was here. Read with me in the 5th Chapter of Exodus, verses 1 through 9. We will be using verse 2 as our text. I will come back

and re-read it in a moment. ***“And afterward Moses and Aaron went in, and told Pharaoh, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Let my people go, that they may hold a feast unto me in the wilderness. And Pharaoh said, Who is the LORD, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not the LORD, neither will I let Israel go. And they said, The God of the Hebrews hath met with us: let us go, we pray thee, three days’ journey into the desert, and sacrifice unto the LORD our God; lest he fall upon us with pestilence, or with the sword. And the king of Egypt said unto them, Wherefore do ye, Moses and Aaron, let the people from their works? Get***

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you into your burdens. And Pharaoh said, Behold, the people of the land now are many, and ye make them rest from their burdens. And Pharaoh commanded the same day the taskmasters of the people, and their officers, saying. Ye shall no more give the people straw to make brick, as heretofore ; let them go and gather straw for themselves. And the tale (tally, or the count) of the bricks, which they did make heretofore, ye shall lay upon them; ye shall

not diminish ought thereof: for they be idle; therefore they cry, saying, Let us go and sacrifice to our God. Let there more work be laid upon the men, that they may labor therein; and let them not regard vain words."

In other words, Pharaoh ordered his captains and those in charge of the brick making, saying, "Don't give them any more straw to make their bricks with. Make them gather their own straw, but do not let them cut down on the number of bricks they make." They still have to make the same number of bricks, but they have to gather their own straw as well as the other things they do in the process of making bricks. I want to use, as I said, Exodus Chapter 5 and verse 2. ***"And Pharaoh said, Who is the LORD, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not the LORD, neither will I let Israel go."***

Pharaoh was a very arrogant person when it came to dealing with Moses and Aaron and, actually, with God, as well as the Children of Israel. Little did this King of Egypt know that he was dealing with a man, in Moses, who at one time yielded almost as much power in Egypt as he did.

Remember, the Scripture says, ***"There arose a Pharaoh that knew not Joseph"***. He was dealing with Moses who was the son, the adopted son, of Pharaoh's daughter; therefore, the adopted grandson of a previous Pharaoh.

It is amazing that in the life of Moses how God in His providence trained him for the work that he was to do. First of all, the first 40 years of his life were spent in the household of Pharaoh learning the ways of government, and learning how to conduct himself at court. Then he fled into the wilderness and spent 40 years caring for sheep.

Well, you say, "how did that prepare him?" Well, Israel was God's sheep. And so, in leading them, and then the last 40 years of his life was spent actually in leading the children of Israel. I used to tell students in the school in Illinois, when they complained of having to come to school as long as they did, to stop and think for a little bit. Moses went to school for 80 years to serve the Lord for 40 years. It took him a while to get prepared. And, some fellows are like one in Little Rock, Arkansas, where we had a fellow

to come to school there one time and when they started to explaining to him the courses and what he would have to do to get a Bachelor's Degree and a Master's Degree, and then a Doctor's Degree, he said "Oh no, the world is going to hell if I don't get out there and get started to preaching it will." He said, "I want to go through school in three months".

First of all, if the world is going to go to hell during that three months, it will go to hell anyway. He wasn't going to stop that! The Scriptural record declares concerning Moses in Hebrews 11: 24-26 **"By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward."** Moses was a man of faith, and Moses looked out into the future like several people mentioned in the 11th chapter of Hebrews verses 24 through 26. Pharaoh asked a very arrogant question. **"Who is the Lord that I should obey his voice and let Israel go?"** Who is the Lord? The secret of this very haughty spirit is found in the next sentence. **"I know not the LORD, neither will I let Israel go."** Those who do not know the God of the Hebrews—the God of the Bible—the God whose we are and whom we serve, can be expected to pose these high and mighty and conceited questions such as Pharaoh posed.

I suspect that by now you have discerned that my subject is **"Who is the Lord That I Should Obey Him?"** I will answer this question in the message, but I would like to say one thing before I proceed to do that. I will tell you that before God is finished with Pharaoh and Egypt, they will be ready for Israel to leave! In fact, they will beg them to get out in a hurry. And the women of Egypt will give the women of Israel anything they ask for – their gold, their silver, their jewelry – all of those things they will give to them. "We want you out of our land; because you cause us too much misery" So, before God gets through with Pharaoh and the people of Egypt, they will all know who the Lord is, and why they should obey his voice.

First of all, I want to show you that this is not an isolated case of men speaking so presumptuously against God. This is not an isolated case! We might think that Pharaoh is an exception to the rule, but that is the way of natural man. And the higher up he is in government, the more apt he is to be as Pharaoh was.

We will look at some people in a moment. But, let us look again to Pharaoh's arrogant statement. **"Who is the LORD, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go?"** The Lord had told Moses in advance that this is what would happen. You see, God did not get caught by surprise. God never gets caught by surprise! He knew exactly what Pharaoh would do. So, in Exodus 3:19, he said, **"And I am sure that the king of Egypt will not let you go, no, not by a mighty hand."** Then in Chapter 7, and in verse 4 of Exodus, he said, **"But Pharaoh shall not hearken unto you, that I may lay my hand upon Egypt, and bring forth mine armies, and my people the children of Israel, out of the land of Egypt by great judgments."**

In other words, he is not going to let you go because I have raised him up to show my power in him and to make my judgments known. He is not going to let you go. In fact, God would harden his heart so that he would not let them go. He also told Moses how he would change the mind of Pharaoh, and that Pharaoh would eventually let them go. In Exodus Chapter 3, verses 20 through 22, God says, **"And I will stretch out my hand, and smite Egypt with all my wonders which I will do in the midst thereof: and after that he will let you go. And I will give this people favor in the sight of the Egyptians: and it shall come to pass, that, when ye go, ye shall not go empty."**

Now remember, for many years they had been slaves, and they had not accumulated any wealth because they had not been paid. They were slaves! But he said, **when you go out, you will not go empty. I will see to that!** God would be in control! And he said, **"I will give this people favor in the sight of the Egyptians: and it shall come to pass, that, when ye go, ye shall not go empty: But every woman shall borrow of her neighbor, and of her that sojourneth in her house, jewels of**

silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment: and ye shall put them upon your sons, and upon your daughters; and ye shall spoil the Egyptians.” Now, I don’t have this in the message, but let me tell you, there was a reason behind this. When they got out in the wilderness God was going to have Moses build the tabernacle. And they were going to have boards that were overlaid with gold. And they were going to set those boards in sockets of silver. And all of the materials that were to go into that tabernacle would come from Egypt. The women of Egypt would supply all the materials. All of the beautiful covering that was on the inside—the material to make that. All of the silver and the gold to make all the tables and the table of the shewbread and the different things, it all came from Egypt. Because they had had Israel in bondage where they could not accumulate anything like that. God said, “Don’t worry about that. I am going to get it for you from the people of Egypt. From the women of Egypt.

I said I was going to tell you about some other people who were like Pharaoh. We have studied about Sennacherib in the Book of Nehemiah. The Scriptures that I am using come from II Kings and I believe one from II Chronicles...but Sennacherib had the same haughty spirit that Pharaoh had. In II Kings Chapter 18: 33-35. When they went to Sennacherib and talked to him about the God of Israel....Listen to what he said. **“Hath any of the gods of the nations delivered at all his land out of the hand of the king of Assyria? Where are the gods of Hamath, and of Arpad? Where are the gods of Hamath, and of Arpad? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim, Hena, and Ivah? Have they delivered Samaria out of mine hand? Who are they among all the gods of the countries, that have delivered their country out of mine hand, that the LORD should deliver Jerusalem out of mine hand?** He said, “I’ve defeated all these other gods, all these other countries and their gods.” He said, “What makes you think that the God of Israel is going to be able to do something that they couldn’t do? Just show me one country that I have battled against that I have not defeated, and I will do the same

thing to Israel. How is their God going to be able to excel above these other gods and conquer me? Sennacherib and his people made the mistake of thinking that God was like the gods of other nations—gods made with men’s hands. They had the idea that Israel’s God was a God made by hands. But, if that had just stopped a bit they would have realized that Israel did not worship idols, they would have known better than that. But, when people are blinded by their depravity, they do not recognize—they don’t think about things like that.

But, God would show him and his mighty men that He was not a mere man-made god. God is the man-maker, not man the God-maker in this case. II Chronicles 32 verse 20 through 23, he said, **“And for this cause Hezekiah the king, and the prophet Isaiah the son of Amoz, prayed and cried to heaven. And the LORD sent an angel, (now listen to this) which cut off all the mighty men of valor, and the leaders and captains in the camp of the king of Assyria. So he returned with shame of face to his own land.”**

Something else happened when he got back there. **“And when he was come into the house of his god, they that came forth of his own bowels (his own sons killed him) slew him there with the sword.”**

That is quite a turnaround. You show me the god that I haven’t destroyed, and the people who worship those gods that I haven’t destroyed, but he went home with a shamed face. And his own sons killed him in the house of his god. Amazing, isn’t it, how God can tear down the haughtiness and pride of someone like that. **“Thus the LORD saved Hezekiah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem from the hand of Sennacherib the king of Assyria, and from the hand of all other, and guided them on every side.** Listen to what happened. **“And many brought gifts unto the LORD to Jerusalem, and presents to Hezekiah king of Judah: so that he was magnified in the sight of all nations from thenceforth.”** God turned that thing totally around. Sennacherib’s pride was so shamed. Here he had said “just show me a nation that I can’t defeat. Show me a god that I can’t defeat, and he went home with shamed face.” And his own sons killed him. II

Chronicles 32 verse 21, ***“And the LORD sent an angel, which cut off all the mighty men of valor, and the leaders and captains in the camp of the king of Assyria. So he returned with shame of face to his own land. And when he was come into the house of his god, they that came forth of his own bowels slew him there with the sword.”*** It happened unto him as Solomon declared. ***“Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before downfall.”***

You see, this haughty spirit is natural to wicked, unregenerate men. That is why it is not unusual to have someone, it may not be a very important person as far as the world is concerned, laugh at you if you try to talk to him about God. He will laugh at you. I have had them laugh at me. This is a natural thing. In the Book of Job, Chapter 21, verses 7 through 16... rather lengthy reading, but I want to read it. ***“Wherefore do the wicked live, become old, yea, are mighty in power? Their seed is established in their sight with them, and their offspring before their eyes. Their houses are safe from fear, neither is the rod of God upon them. Their bull gendereth, and faileth not; their cow calveth, and casteth not her calf. They send forth their little ones like a flock, and their children dance. They take the timbrel and harp, and rejoice at the sound of the organ. They spend their days in wealth, and in a moment go down to the grave. Therefore they say unto God, ‘Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. What is the Almighty, that we should serve him? and what profit should we have, if we pray unto him? Lo, their good is not in their hand: the counsel of the wicked is far from me.’”*** The counsel of the wicked is far from me. You see their arrogance? They want to know why they should pray to the Lord. Why they should serve the Lord, etc. Hear David’s description of the wicked and his attitude toward God in Psalm 10, verses 3 and 4. ***“For the wicked boasteth of his heart’s desire, and blesseth the covetous, whom the LORD abhorreth. The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God: God is not in all his thoughts.”*** Both David and Paul said that man by nature has no

fear of God before his eyes. Psalm 36: verses 1 through 4. ***“The transgression of the wicked saith within my heart, that there is no fear of God before his eyes. For he flattereth himself in his own eyes, until his iniquity be found to be hateful. The words of his mouth are iniquity and deceit: he hath left off to be wise, and to do good. He deviseth mischief upon his bed; he setteth himself in a way that is not good; he abhorreth not evil.”*** Then in Romans 3:18, Paul said, ***“There is no fear of God before their eyes.”***

Now, the second thing I want to point out is, that God showed Pharaoh that he was the mighty God of Heaven—not a god made by man’s hands. God declared to Pharaoh that it was his purpose to destroy him, and many of his people. Exodus 9:16, He says to Pharaoh, ***“And in very deed for this cause have I raised thee up, for to shew in thee my power; and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth.”*** Listen to me, God can use the wicked as an instrument for his own glory just like he can use a saved person. And that is what he did with Pharaoh. He said, ***“I raised you up for this very purpose. To show my power, and that my name might be glorified throughout the earth.”***

As we saw earlier, God said in essence, “when I get through with Pharaoh he will let my people go!” And we read in Exodus 3:19 and 20, ***“And I am sure that the king of Egypt will not let you go, no, not by a mighty hand. And I will stretch out my hand, and smite Egypt with all my wonders which I will do in the midst thereof: and after that he will let you go.”***

I don’t have time to enumerate the plagues that God brought on the land of Egypt. But, the last one THE DEATH OF THE FIRSTBORN, is the one that caused them to beg Israel to leave, and get out in a hurry!

There were times during the plagues that it appeared that Pharaoh had repented, and that he would let them go. But, I was thinking about it this morning—it reminds me of a lady in a church that I pastored—I won’t name the church, but I pastored this church that had this lady who missed a lot of church. I would go see her, and she would say “I am going to start

coming...I am going to start coming". Then she would get sick, and I would go see her while she was sick. She would say, "Just as soon as I get well, I will be back to church". Well, when she got well, she would say, "Well, you know, I made that promise while I was sick." And she wouldn't come to church. I told her one day, "One of these days, God is going to take His rod to you, and when He gets through with you, you'll run to church". And it happened! It happened! She got really sick, and thought she wasn't going to live and when she got over it that time, she came to church.

Well, Pharaoh said things that, it looked like at least two different times during these plagues, he was going to let Israel go. He compromised. (I prepared a lesson to teach in Thailand on Pharaoh's compromises.) He would compromise and say, "Well, the men can go, but everybody else has to stay here. Well, you can go, but you can't take your cattle. Well, you can go, but you can't take your children." He would just keep compromising every time a plague would come. Finally, it would look like he had repented. We read in Exodus 9:27 through 35—God had sent a plague of hail, thunder and lightning and rain, ***“And Pharaoh sent, and called for Moses and Aaron, and said unto them. ‘I have sinned this time: the LORD is righteous, and I and my people are wicked. Intreat the LORD (for it is enough) that there be no more mighty thunderings and hail; and I will let you go, and ye shall stay no longer. And Moses said unto him, As soon as I am gone out of the city, I will spread abroad my hands unto the LORD; and the thunder shall cease, neither shall there be any more hail; that thou mayest know how that the earth is the LORD’S. But as for thee and thy servants, I know that ye will not yet fear the LORD God. And the flax and the barley was smitten: for the barley was in the ear, and the flax was bolled. But the wheat and the rie were not smitten: for they were not grown up. And Moses went out of the city from Pharaoh, and spread abroad his hands unto the LORD: and the thunders and hail ceased,, and the rain was not poured upon the earth. And when Pharaoh saw that the rain and the hail and the thunders were***

ceased, he sinned yet more, and hardened his heart, he and his servants. And the heart of Pharaoh was hardened, neither would he let the children of Israel go; as the LORD had spoken by Moses.”

God sent another plague. He sent a plague of locusts. Those locusts were eating up everything. I remember my Daddy telling about a time when he was a boy that there was a plague of locusts where he lived, and he said they actually ate part of the fenceposts. That is how bad they were. They got so thick that the sky was darkened. There were so many locusts.

Now, this year is a year when the locusts are coming out. I have had a few on my back porch come to the light. But there are not enough of them to make a good song at night. You know, when they are thick you can hear them sing when the sun goes down in the afternoon. Well, there are not enough of them to sing this year, that I can hear. Maybe I am not going out far enough toward the woods.

Anyway, when the plague of locusts was destroying everything in sight, it appeared again that Pharaoh had learned his lesson. Exodus 10: 14-20 said, ***“And the locusts went up over all the land of Egypt, and rested in all the coasts of Egypt, and rested in all the coasts of Egypt: very grievous were they; before them there were no such locusts as they, neither after them shall be such. For they covered the face of the whole earth, so that the land was darkened; and they did eat every herb of the land, and all the fruit of the trees which the hail had left: and there remained*** (see this plague of locusts followed the plague that we talked about a few moments ago. The hail, the rain, the thunder, etc.) ***not any green thing in the trees, or in the herbs of the field, through all the land of Egypt. Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron in haste; and he said, I have sinned against the LORD your God, and against you. Now therefore forgive, I pray thee, my sin only this once, and intreat the LORD your God, that he may take away from me this death only. And he went out from Pharaoh, and intreated the LORD. And the LORD turned a mighty strong west wind, which took away the locusts, and cast them into the Red sea;***

there remained not one locust in all the coasts of Egypt.”

You know, when God does something, he does it thoroughly. When he destroyed the locusts, he got rid of all of them. There was not one left! ***“But the LORD hardened Pharaoh’s heart, so that he would not let the children of Israel go.”*** Now you talk about no fear of God before his eyes, false repentance such as this was, is a sign of great arrogance toward God.

The time came when God said he would bring one more plague, and after that, Pharaoh would thrust the people out of the land. He not only asked them to leave, he would run them out. Exodus 11:1 ***“And the LORD said unto Moses, Yet will I bring one plague more upon Pharaoh, and upon Egypt; afterwards he will let you go hence: when he shall let you go, he shall surely thrust you out hence altogether.”*** And when the cry went up out of all Egypt because of the death of all the firstborn, Pharaoh and his people urged him to leave in haste. Exodus 12: 29-36. ***“And it came to pass, that at midnight the LORD smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh that sat on his throne unto the firstborn of the captive that was in the dungeon; and all the firstborn of cattle. And Pharaoh rose up in the night, he, and all his servants, and all the Egyptians; and there was a great cry in Egypt; for there was not a house where there was not one dead. And he called for Moses and Aaron by night, and said, ‘Rise up, and get you forth from among my people, both ye and the children of Israel; and go, serve the LORD, as ye have said. Also take your flocks and your herds, as ye have said, and be gone; and bless me also. And the Egyptians were urgent upon the people, that they might send them out of the land in haste; for they said, ‘We be all dead men.’ And the people took their dough before it was leavened, their kneadingtroughs being bound up in their clothes upon their shoulders. And the children of Israel did according to the word of Moses; and they borrowed of the Egyptians jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment: And the LORD gave the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians, so***

that they lent unto them such things as they required. And they spoiled the Egyptians.”

Now, let me come to the third and final point of this message. **Who is the LORD that we should obey Him?** Who is the LORD that we should obey Him? Pharaoh said, “Who is LORD that I should obey Him?” I ask the question, “Who is the LORD that we should obey him?”

First of all, he is the God who has mercy on whom he will have mercy, and hardens whom he will harden. He had mercy on Israel and mercy on Moses, but he hardened Pharaoh. Romans 9:17 and 18 says, ***“For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth.”***

He is the God who spoke this world into existence. Just with a word! ***“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”*** And since he spoke it into existence, he has the right to control everything that goes on in it! He is the God who does according to his will everywhere. Daniel 4: 35 says, ***“...he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, ‘What doest thou?’”***

He is the God who is in the heavens, and does as he pleases. David said, ***“Our God is in the heavens, he has done whatsoever he has pleased.”*** David said again in Psalm 135-verse 6 ***“Whatsoever the LORD pleased, that did he in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places.”***

He is the God who destroyed Pharaoh and his armies at the Red Sea. Exodus 15: 1-12. I won’t take time to read it, but it is a song of Moses and the children of Israel, and they sang about how God threw the horsemen and the chariots. When God took Israel across the Red Sea, he took them across on dry ground. He had rolled the water back and all night long, he caused an east wind to blow and dry the ground, and the children of Israel went across on dry ground. ***And the armies of Pharaoh***

said, 'Well, we will pursue and we will go after them. If he can cross like that, we can too. But they got out into the middle of the Red Sea, and God turned the waters loose, and flooded them, and I believe the Scripture says something like this, "they all floated up dead on the shore." The enemy said, "I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil. My lust shall be satisfied upon them. I will draw my sword and my hand shall destroy them. Thou didst blow with thy wind. The sea covered them. They sank as lead in the mighty waters. Who is like unto thee, O LORD, among the gods. Who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders. Thou stretcheth out thy right hand and the earth swallowed them.

He is the God who destroyed the mighty men of Sennacherib, and caused Sennacherib to go home in shame. Such shame he brought on his people, that his own sons killed him in the house of their god.

He is the God who brought the flood and destroyed all the inhabitants of the earth, with the exception of 8 people.

He is the God who confounded the language of the people of the world, and stopped the building of the tower of Babel.

He is the God who destroyed the arrogant Belshazzar. Belshazzar gave a big feast. He commanded that all the vessels of the house of the LORD be brought out. He would show God what a mighty king he was. So he drank wine from the vessels of the house of the LORD. The gold and silver cups. He drank wine and all of his princes drank wine. And while he was drinking a hand appeared on the wall and said "Thou art weighed in the balances and found wanting. This night your kingdom is taken from you. And I will give it to someone else." Already, outside the city of Babylon the Medes and the Persians had dug a ditch to channel the river that ran right through the city of Babylon around the city of Babylon. Therefore, the water went down and they went under the walls that surrounded the city, and went in and took the land. And Belshazzar died that night. And God gave the kingdom to another country.

He is the God who destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah and the other cities of the plains.

As David said, Let the heathen rage and people imagine a vain thing, or **"Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD,** (remember I said this was not an isolated case with Pharaoh) **and against his anointed saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us."**

And God just sits up in Heaven and rings his hands and doesn't know he is going to do. Poor God! No! A thousand times, No! My Bible says, **"He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision. Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure."**

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, let me close with these words. Who is the Lord that we should obey him? Let me also conclude with another passage from the Psalms. **Psalm 2, verse 6 through 12. "Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, 'Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession, Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little.** (his wrath is just kindled a little bit) **Blessed are all they that put their trust in him." Who is the Lord that I should obey Him?**

I will tell you what, you'd better obey Him. He commands all men everywhere to repent and to believe on His Son Jesus Christ! You know, as my Daddy used to say, "If you know what is good for you, you will do that." If you know what is good for you, you will fear the Lord. You will obey the Lord! You will repent of your sins toward God. You will believe on the Lord Jesus Christ with all your heart. Who is the Lord that we should obey Him? **"Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little."**

(CHURCH AUTHORITY CONT. FROM P. 1)
 Headship of Christ. Nothing in the word “sovereignty” can apply to the church. “Sovereignty” is “supreme power, supremacy; the possession of the highest power, or of uncontrollable power. Absolute sovereignty belongs to God only.” (**Webster, 1828**). The church is autonomous, not sovereign. “Autonomous” means “independent in government; having the right of self-government” (**Webster, 1828**). I believe in the autonomy of the church, not the sovereignty of the church. Christ is sovereign; the church is autonomous under His sovereign rule.

I have not found absolute church authority advocated by any reputable and venerable Baptist writer. If such is true, why have many not written at length and demonstrated that the church has the absolute authority some preachers have claimed it to have? In his ***The Origin and Nature of the Church***, Davis Huckabee, writing on “The Church is a Sovereign and Authoritative Assembly” qualified this heading thusly: “The Church is not sovereign in the sense that it can do anything it pleases; it is sovereign in the sense that it is authorized and empowered to do what the Lord commands, and neither needs, nor is to subject itself to any other authority.” (p.101) What Bro. Huckabee is advocating corresponds with my definitions above and the exposition which follows.

ONLY CHRIST HAS ABSOLUTE AUTHORITY; THE CHURCH HAS BUT LIMITED AUTHORITY.

THE ABSOLUTE AUTHORITY OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, *Matthew 28:18*: “And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.”

“Power” is “*exsousia*” which means “authoritative power.” This word is found 103 times in the Greek New Testament and is translated in the KJV 69 times as “power,” 29 times as “authority,” 2 times as “right,” and one time each as “liberty,” “jurisdiction,” and “strength” according to the ***Greek-English Concordance*** by J. B. Smith

Christ alone has absolute power. He said, “**All power** is given unto me. . .” His power must therefore be unlimited. If it were only limited power He has, He could not claim *all power or authority* for Himself. That His power and authority is not transferred to the church but remain His alone is evident from His words in ***Matthew 28:20*: “and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.”** Christ in and with His church is its sole power and authority. The church needs no power or authority transferred to it since it has Christ who has all authority with it to the end of the world.

Christ alone has absolute mediatorial power. When He said, “All power is **given unto me.**” He spoke not as God but as the Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus (***1 Timothy 2:5***). This power He was given as the fruit and reward of His resurrection. ***Romans 1:4*: “And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.”**

Christ alone has universal power. He declared, “All power is given unto me **in heaven and in earth.**” This means there is no power or authority anywhere that is not His. Jesus said, “**All things are delivered unto me of my Father. . .**” (***Matthew 11:27***). He claims for Himself **absolute authority** everywhere, even in hell. He said, “**I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death**” (***Revelation 1:18***).

THE LIMITED AND SPECIFIC AUTHORITY OF HIS CHURCH.

***Matthew 28:19, 20*: “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.”**

The church has a commission. A commission is always limited in scope. There is a reason we refer to the *Great Commission*, not the *Great Authority* of the church. Note the contrast in the words “commission” and “authorize” as defined in *Webster’s Dictionary of*

Synonyms, p. 91: "One authorizes a person to act for oneself if when he is given the necessary legal right or power, with or without instructions of a specified character. . .one commissions a person when one not only authorizes but instructs him to perform a definite duty or office." From the meaning of these words, it is obvious the church has a commission, not unlimited authority, for Christ not only authorized the church but instructed it to perform a definite duty.

The church has limited authority. *Mark 13:34: "For the Son of man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch."* That the *authority* referenced in the passage is not unlimited is obvious by the qualifying statement, "***and to every man his work.***" The authority He gave was to do a specific work. This work is that which is specified in the Great Commission.

The church has only the authority given to it by Scripture. Following are specific works enumerated in the Word of God which the church has authority to do: (1) Preach the Gospel, **Mark 16:15**; (2) Baptize believers, **Acts 10:47**; (3) Receive and dismiss members, **Romans 14:1**; **1 Corinthians 5:5, 13**; (4) Elect its officers, **Acts 1:21-26**; **1 Timothy 3:1-13**; **Titus 1:5-9**; (5) Send out missionaries, **Acts 13:1-4**; **14:27**; (6) Observe the Lord's Supper, **1 Corinthians 11:23-26**; (7) Choose messengers, **2 Corinthians 8:19, 23**. You will note that all of these works that the church has been authorized to do are clearly spelled out in Scripture. Where is the passage or passages that clearly explain specific authority has been given to the church to organize other churches? If such authority has been given to the church, surely it is plainly set forth in the Word of God which "***thoroughly furnishes unto all good works***" (**2 Timothy 3:17**).

Concerning the formation of churches, John Gill wrote: "Secondly, A particular church may be considered as to the *form* of it; which lies in a mutual consent and agreement, in their covenant and confederation with each . . .3. This union between them is made by voluntary consent and agreement . . .4. As the original

constitution of churches is by consent and confederation, so the admission of new members to them, is upon the same footing . . .and nothing else but mutual consent, can make a man a church-member . . .7. It is this confederacy, consent, and agreement, that is the formal cause of a church; it is this which not only distinguishes a church from the world, and from all professors that walk at large, the one being within and the other without, but from all other particular churches; so the church at Cenchrea was not the same with the church at Corinth, though but at a little distance from it, because it consisted of persons who had given up themselves to it, and not to the church at Corinth, and so were members of the one and not of the other." **Body of Divinity**, pp. 856-858.

Furthermore, we must stress again that the Scriptures govern the church and are over the church. The church has no authority that is not specifically given to it by the Scriptures. The church is not over the Scriptures and never has authority to act contrary to the Scriptures. For any church to claim it has unlimited authority to do even what the Scriptures do not authorize is to practice *Romanism*.

Some have contended one must be in the church to understand the Scriptures. This assertion we deny. The Holy Spirit, not the church, is the first teacher of Scriptures, and if one is born of God, he has the Holy Spirit within him. **Romans 8:9: "But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."** **John 14:26: "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."** See further **1 Corinthians 2:12-14**; **1 John 2:27**

The limited authority of the church is substantiated by all Baptist Confessions of Faith. The following excerpts from both ancient and modern confessions confirm that truth that the authority of the church is limited.

The Waldenses Confession of 1544, "The church . . .governed by His Word and guided by the Holy Spirit."

The First London or 1644 Confession,

“That every church has power given them from Christ for their better well-being.” “Christ . . . placeth some special men over the church.”

The Second London or 1689 Confession, “To each of these churches thus gathered, according to His mind declared in His Word, He hath given all that power and authority, which is anyway needful for their carrying on that order and worship and discipline.”

The New Hampshire Confession of 1833, “Exercising the gifts, rights, and privileges invested in them by His Word.

The venerable J. R. Graves wrote, “Each church is a living body, to which Christ committed both the sacred oracles and ordinances of Christianity . . . The true churches are the only authorized exponents of Christ’s revelation, and of what Christianity is; and therefore, to them is thus committed its wholeness and its symmetry.” **Old Landmarkism**, p. 35.

CONCLUSION

THE CHURCH HAS BUT A LIMITED AND SPECIFIC AUTHORITY; ABSOLUTE AUTHORITY BELONGS TO OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST ALONE!

OUR ONLY JOY IN VIEW OF THE WORLD TO COME

By James Meikle, 1730 -1799

Truly, O worldlings! I pity you. Now you seem to be great and full of fun. But, though you shine on the outside, there is an awful blank within. ***If in this life only I have hope, I would of all men be most miserable;*** for the greatest thing I could either hope for, or desire below, are trifling in comparison of the great and glorious things of eternity that I aspire after. What good would my life do me, did I not live to die, that I may live forever? What would my time be—but a rotation of toils and troubles, did it not afford me an opportunity to prepare and improve for eternity? How would every forethought about this present life trouble me, did not the solid hope of a future world sustain me?

As for my part, I would not wish a worse hell, than that my eternal habitation were among the wicked in Mesech—where my unsubdued corruptions and carnal affections were perpetuated. But I know in whom I have believed, and that he will not delay to gather his scattered sheep together, that there may be one Shepherd, and one flock, in the fields above. Eternity is already begun in my soul, and my inward part is refreshed with foretastes of fruition and glory. Hence my thoughts take wing beyond the bounds of time, and dwell, (though, alas! too short,) amidst the glories of the better world. Hence I am contented with my present state, and would not exchange my condition with kings. Hence the early beamings of that blessed day, when my Beloved and I shall meet, to part no more—refresh and ravish all my soul. Hence I triumph amidst all the transitory scenes of sorrow which I labor under; and am not moved, either by unjust reproach, or vain applause.

O the emptiness of this present world! but O the excellences of the world to come! Faith and hope—fetch me some of the first-ripe fruits, some of the grapes of Eshcol. Surely, this world would be a wilderness to me, did I not look on myself only as a traveler through it—as a way-faring man that shall tarry therein but for a few nights.

There is a restlessness in my bosom that shall never be removed until I rest in God. Yes, even now, God is the resting-place of my soul, otherwise I would be tormented with strong pain, and torn with agonies of mind. Yet the most pleasant calm and tranquility I enjoy here, through the imperfections of this state, and remaining corruption—is far from being complete at best, and oftentimes is interrupted. But the rest I wait for, is refreshing, perfect, and eternal.

Hasten, then, the day when you shall descend to mount your glorious throne, and appear the second time without sin unto salvation; when you shall accomplish all my desires, fill my longing soul, admit me to the nearest communion, and satisfy me with the sublimest bliss. For this I patiently wait. In the mean time, I lay up my treasures in heaven, where I dwell by hope, and have taken up my

mansion by faith in the promise, until the day of my solemn removal come, when by the divine command, I shall be carried over to the land of rest.

Miserable are those who have no joy in the prospect of a world to come—without which I would be swallowed up in sorrow. Miserable are those who find their pleasure, and place their happiness—in the painted trifles of a momentary life—but are tortured with the thoughts of eternity, and put on the rack if they glance beyond the grave!

CRUCIFIXION

There is a reciprocal crucifixion which I should desire and seek after. First, that the world may be crucified unto me. And, secondly, that I may be crucified unto the world. This is a noble figure representing the Christian's full and free disentanglement from the world.

It is possible to break the connection, and cut asunder the bands between two people of the closest friendship, sameness of sentiment, and oneness of interest enough that one party be crucified; for the other may still have affections and feelings after the mangled, though once amiable companion. But when *both* are crucified, all bonds are broken, and all ties are eternally dissolved.

When a person becomes noxious to society, an enemy to the commonwealth and a rebel against just authority—then he merits such an ignominious death as crucifixion. Well, then, the world is an enemy to the life divine, noxious to the welfare of my soul, and a rebel against the authority of Heaven. Therefore I should earnestly seek to have it crucified to my affections—and my affections to it.

When a person is crucified, his friends need expect no favor from him, and his foes need fear no harm at his hand. So, if the world be crucified to me, I shall neither court its smiles, nor fear its frowns. I shall expect nothing—and I shall never be disappointed. I shall dread nothing—and I shall never be in danger.

He who would win heaven must crucify the world. For while the world lives in the affections, it will all ways come between the soul and heaven. Now, what a mighty mountain, what a steep ascent is this—the sad experience of unhappy thousands can tell, who never could climb over the terrestrial globe to the heavenly land! But, intoxicated with pleasures, choked with cares, and crushed with the

ponderous mass—sink down to endless woe!

Again, as a crucified man, whose extremities are bored through and whose body is besmeared with blood, and his countenance disfigured in death, is a very moving spectacle to every feeling beholder; so the world, crucified to the believing soul, will appear vain and empty, vile and abominable, and loathsome for the fond embraces of mental affection.

And as a dead body soon becomes stinking carrion, so a crucified world, in the nostrils of a renewed soul, can send nothing up but a vile odor. All its perishing pleasures—which are rich perfumes to carnal minds—will be but like open graves to gracious souls.

Finally I shall be an immense gainer by this double crucifixion; for as no man will hoard up human skulls, bones, and putrefying carcasses, for a treasure; so the world thus crucified, and all its vanities—shall be the object of my deepest contempt and loathing! While things spiritual, heavenly, and divine—shall share my whole esteem, and enrich my soul for eternity itself!

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