

The Authority of Scripture

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Introduction

Authority is an interesting idea, and a confusing one.

Do you or I have the authority to do this or that?

- does your boss have the authority to do this or that?
- Where does that authority come? Does it come with any constraints?
- Must I listen to this authority or that authority?
- What if two of my authorities are in conflict?

When I was in college I worked for a few years for the dining room at Moody Bible Institute in Chicago. My first job there was as the “ticket taker,” the one who made sure entrance to the dining room was by **paid staff** or **students**, and — lucky me — i was also the one who was given the **authority** to **allow** or **deny** students entrance based upon the dress code that was in place at the time. **Not a good job.**

In the 80’s the dress code at Moody was pretty much a thing. So men were to be wearing (at breakfast and lunch) slacks, belts, shirt with a collar.

One breakfast in particular, I remember some poor bloke coming down the hall and stopping before me. He was obviously **not in code**, and my job was clear. I was **not** to allow him entrance in his condition of dress. If I did my boss (or bosses) would let me have it, because their boss would let them have it. “Come on, man,” he said, “it’s not a big deal.” I turned him away, out into utter darkness, where there was wailing and gnashing of teeth. How to win friends and influence people!

I had some authority, and I was supposed to use my authority to do the bidding of my bosses, and they were to do the bidding of their boss. I didn't have much authority on my own.

I tell you this story because this was a difficult job. Physically simple, socially difficult. I had two immediate bosses, both students, both women, who were my supervisors. They both worked very often, and I was responsible to both of them. One I preferred, we were friends off job, I even went to the circus with her one day. The other was friendly too. The problem was, there were two.

On a couple of occasions they both told me conflicting things. That's when things got interesting. Now, this story is not going to get more interesting, because I can't remember any specific thing that was told that was conflicting, but I do remember feeling like I wish I knew what to do in this situation.

In life, as a Christian, you should never have to come to that position. It will be difficult in life, in regards to authority. But I will tell you one thing you must remember, and It's a scriptural idea, but we seem to loose it in the hard times...

One Authority / Jesus

There is only one authority that you are to serve, one.

Not two, but one.

- Samuel, speaking to the “idol-loving” Israelis of his day, told them to “serve God only.” [1 Samuel 7:3-4](#)
- Jesus when speaking to the devil himself

Matthew 4:10 ESV

¹⁰ Then Jesus said to him, “Be gone, Satan! For it is written, “ ‘You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.’ ”

All other authority is relegated under God and his Word. He is first, he is pre-eminent.

The Biblical Authority of Jesus and His Word

Let us consider his authority for a minute...

In [Psalm 2](#), the follow up—the part two—from the more pastoral [Psalm 1](#), we see God saying to the World that there is but **one king**, the Lord / nations rise up against him in vain, he is the ruler, and we all should learn to serve the Lord with fear and trembling, kiss him, and take refuge in him.

God is the supreme authority, the Messiah, which this passage speaks of is of equal authority.

While [Psalm 1](#) is never quoted in the NT, [Psalm 2](#) is quoted or alluded to 18 times. The New Testament writers acknowledged that **Jesus was the fulfilment of the Psalm**, and the rightful ruler of the universe. Let's take a quick look at three instances of many in the New Testament where Jesus is said to be Lord of All.

Psalm 2:10–12 ESV

¹⁰ Now therefore, O kings, be wise; be warned, O rulers of the earth. ¹¹ Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. ¹² Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish in the way, for his wrath is quickly kindled. Blessed are all who take refuge in him.

- **At his Baptism** / [Matthew 3:17](#) / and behold, a voice from heaven said, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.”
- **At the Great Commission** / [Matthew 28:18](#) / And Jesus came and said to them, “**All** authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.
- **In Explaining his Position and Superiority in the book of Hebrews** / [Hebrews 1:2](#) / but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son,

whom he appointed **the heir of all things**, through whom also he created the world.

If the Son is the ultimate authority, then **the word that he utters is authoritative in its declarations and commands**. We see that Idea in scripture as well.

- Paul told Timothy that scripture is “sacred,” ([2 Timothy 3:15](#)), meaning to be revered and set apart and useful and authoritative.
- Paul also states that “All scripture is breathed out by God,” it comes from the breath of his mouth, he is the source. [2 Timothy 3:16](#)
- Peter confirms what Paul states in [2 Peter 1:19-21](#) that scripture is “a lamp shining in a dark place,” and that scripture does not originate in the mind of someone’s interpretation, but that “men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.”
- Over 645 verses throughout scripture use some connection between God and his Word.
- Continued...

In scripture, the term “word of God” is almost interchangeable for scripture and Jesus.

The authority of Christ and that of Scripture are one. **R. C. Sproul**

We have the Word of God

- **The Word The Incarnate Christ / [John 1](#), [Hebrews 4:12](#)**
- **The Word, the written Word of God / [2 Timothy 3:16](#) and Elsewhere.**
- The other important concept is the “forever nature” of the Word; [Psalm 119:89](#); [Isaiah 40:8](#); [1 Peter 1:25](#)

Since God is the ultimate authority of the Universe, the written Word of God is the ultimate authority of the universe. Period. And it never fades away.

Some Historical Extra-biblical Statements of The Authority of God's Word

Westminster Catechism / 1647

In 1647 the Westminster Catechism was compiled. **Generic Assertion / Westminster Larger Catechism / Question 3**

What is the Word of God?

The holy scriptures of the Old and New Testament are the word of God, the only rule of faith and obedience.

The Westminster Larger Catechism: With Scripture Proofs. (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1996).

The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy / 1978

The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy, 1978, a gathering of scholars drafting some positions on what the Bible says about itself, and how should we view scripture in light of mounting heresy and denial of Scripture's authority.

Article 1 /

We **affirm** that the Holy Scriptures are to be received as **the authoritative Word of God**.

We deny that the Scriptures receive their authority from the Church, tradition, or any other human source.

Article 2 /

We **affirm** that the Scriptures are the supreme written norm by which God binds the conscience, and that the authority of the Church is subordinate to that of Scripture.

We deny that Church creeds, councils, or declarations have authority greater than or equal to the authority of the Bible.

There are some 17 other statements that I would encourage you to consider, I've linked to them.

Principle / God Alone / Scripture Alone

When we say we believe in the Authority of Scripture we are not simply saying it is AN authority, we are saying it is THE authority

- **All** other authorities are place underneath it, are accountable to this authority. The sub-authorities that we serve on this earth have been given by God for specific purposes, when they fail to do the things God wants the to do, they yield their authority.
- Our default position is to live under the authorities that God has given us. But, we are not to get into a worshipful obedience to any other authority.
- **In Christ we are free, and Jesus means free indeed.** We are free to serve God alone! We submit (instance by instance) to others, but not wholly, not globally.
- John MacArthur, in his church's fight during covid over governmental overreach says the following, speaking of [Romans 13](#),

“This [the blessing of the good, the punishment of the bad] is God’s design for government. The problem is, when government ceases to function by God’s design, it yields up its authority [IT IS THE ENTITY THAT IS OUT OF LINE WITH THE ULTIMATE AUTHORITY]. The same would be true in a family. God’s design is that the father lead the family. When the father leads in a destructive and evil way, he yields up the right to exercise that God-given authority.”

Continued...

- A **husband** who abuses his **authority** and mistreats his wife is not worthy of her submission.
- A pastor who abuses his authority and victimizes someone in his congregation is not an an authority worthy of our submission.
- **Is This In Scripture?**
 - Moses’ parents defied Pharaoh’s evil command and did not obey it, they hid the child instead.

- **Pharoah**, though he was king of the Nile was but a servant before the Lord, and Moses, under God's authority, defied him and his will in those long gone days.
- Gideon defied his family and townspeople and his city council and tore down the idols that towered over his community.
- David honored king Saul, but did not submit to the end of his spear. He ran away.
- Elijah defied his King, old Ahab, and Jezebel and stood up to their abuse and tyranny.
- **Daniel**, under the authority of the power of Babylon, defied his king's unrighteous edicts, and served his King alone, and was somehow protected in judgement.
- **Daniel's** three friends stood against the power of an unrighteous law themselves, and found themselves protected and delivered from the hot water they were in.
- **Peter and John** gladly defied the orders of the religious leaders of their days. They were told to not preach anymore in the name of Jesus, their response was "No, it's the only name by which a person can be saved, so, no."
- Scripture is rife with these examples.
- Paul, according to John MacArthur "*was in violation of the government more often than any other person in the entire New Testament. And when he went to preach the gospel, he was very often thrown in jail; and ultimately he was executed by the government that he refused to obey when it no longer functioned to protect good behavior and punish evil behavior.*"
- His principle of Governmental submission could not have meant a stance of TOTAL submission, or he was a very big hypocrite.
- This continued into Church history, we could give many examples, I'll read one.

- William Tyndale defied the King of England and the Pope of Rome by pressing for and delivering an illegally made English translation of the scripture /

“I defy the Pope and all his laws. . . . If God spare my life ere many years, I will cause a boy that driveth the plow, shall know more of the Scripture than thou dost.”

Freedom For you, or for God?

A caveat to this...

1 Peter 2:16–17 ESV

¹⁶ Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God. ¹⁷ Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor.

You may be free to serve God alone, but don't use your freedom as a cover-up for evil. The Greek word for "cover up" means "a strategy to conceal something evil.

Are you denying the authority of someone or something TO SERVE YOURSELF? This is a self-check. Be very careful you are not serving yourself in the guise of serving God.

Living as servants of God. Free to serve God alone!

Then there is a little polite slight at the bottom of this principle...

- *Honor everyone*
- *Love the Brotherhood*
- *Fear God*
 - *Honor the emperor*

How Much Authority Do We Allow Scripture?

I remember going to a church in Lawndale, Chicago with our youth group one time years ago. This was a poor black church in a struggling neighborhood. The worship time was 45 minutes to an hour long, there was a band, there were no overheads, just singing.

One song in particular haunted me that morning, and convicted me.

It was a simple refrain... It lasted 10 minutes, but it stuck in my head, and pierced my heart.

”Why do you call me Lord, Lord and not do what I say.”

The context this phrase finds itself in is the wise man who builds his house on the rock.

[Luke 6:46–49](#) (ESV)

⁴⁶ “Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do what I tell you?”

How do we know that we believe in the Authority of Scripture?

Do we treat them, in our own hearts and lives, as authoritative?

Who is on the Throne in our lives?

Are there areas of our life we have partitioned off and said NO to God’s entrance, his presence, his Word?

Let's Look at the continuation of Jesus' Hard Hitting Words...

Luke 6:47 (ESV)

⁴⁷ Everyone who comes to me and hears my words and does them, I will show you what he is like: ⁴⁸ he is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when a flood arose, the stream broke against that house and could not shake it, because it had been well built. ⁴⁹ But the one who hears and does not do them is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. When the stream broke against it, immediately it fell, and the ruin of that house was great.”

Jesus, in this little parable, which seems fit for children, but is really meant for older people, tells us there are two types of people in this world, when it comes to him.

First, those who comes to Jesus, hears his words, and does them.

Second, those who hears and does not do them.

Those who come to Jesus, and hears his words, and does them...

- Like a man who builds his house and digs a deep foundation to the rock.
- Is able to withstand the troubles of this life, and the next.

The one who hears and does not do them.

- Like the man who builds his house without a foundation.
- Not able to withstand the troubles of life, or the next.

Continued...

The idea here is that when we hear and do what the Lord wants us to do we find that we have found a foundation on which we can build a good life.

- Not just the hearing, but the doing / Why do you call me Lord, Lord and do not do what I say?

FOUNDATIONS!

The Greek word for **foundation** is **themelios** / and were we to run a search for the things God thinks are good foundations we would find a few results...

The foundations of your life, that you want to build in, Biblically, are as follows...

They are not career, hobbies, happiness, etc...

Jesus and His Words (7x) / [Matthew 7:25](#), [Luke 6:48](#), [Luke 6:49](#),
[1 Cor 3:10](#), [11](#), [12](#); [2 Timothy 2:19](#),

The Faith (2x) / [Colossians 1:23](#), [Hebrews 6:1](#)

The Word (Apostles and Prophets) / [Ephesians 2:20](#)

The Gospel / [Romans 15:20](#)

Love (in Christ) / [Ephesians 3:17](#)

God's Work in You and for You / [1 Peter 5:10](#)

Doing Good Works / [1 Tim 6:19](#)

Heaven / [Hebrews 11:10](#); [Revelation 21:14](#), [19](#)

These are the people and things that are truly worth your time and devotion

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Obedience + Love = Joy in Life

Our obedience to Jesus is tightly wrapped around your love for God, which is tightly wrapped around his love for us. [John 14:15](#) [John 15:10](#)

John 14:15 ESV

¹⁵ “If you love me, you will keep my commandments.

John 15:10 ESV

¹⁰ If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in his love.

1 John 1:4

I am writing these things so that our joy may be complete!

John 15:11

These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

If you are struggling with obeying or desiring to obey Jesus and his Word, you might not fully understand his unbound love for you.

Summary and Challenge /

- Multiple authorities cause conflict and division in life.
- Jesus is the authority you should be focusing on in your life.
- The Word of God is that Authority / So focus on it, as it is his Word.
- All other authorities need to understand they are under his Authority
- We need to give Jesus, personally, individually, great authority
- Ever increasing authority
- We will find stability if we do for all of life's challenges.

Challenge /

- Where in life have you held God back? Where have you decided YOU are a better authority than him?
- What would be the result if you let him in that area?
- I dare you to think that through, and open the door...