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Knowledge of The Truth (Part 2)



Authority of Scriptures - Steve Gregg

In "Knowledge of The Truth (Part 2)," Steve Gregg emphasizes the important role of authority in understanding and accepting the truth. He highlights that not all sources of authority hold the same weight and encourages individuals to seek out the highest authority in every matter to ensure right thinking and behavior. Gregg also discusses the concept of delegated authority, emphasizing that it is limited to a specific realm and subject to God's authority. Finally, he concludes that the Scriptures are the ultimate authority on matters of truth.

Transcript

We'll pick up where we left off in the last lecture and finish up the material that's on this handout I gave you. We spent a lot of time defining what is meant by authority and talking about its relationship to knowing the truth. That's what we're talking about, authority and the knowledge of the truth.

I think most people know whatever it is they know, or they think they know, whatever it is they think they know, without giving it much thought of why they think they know it, or on what basis their knowledge rests. That's like I was saying with epistemology, it's a study of the grounds of knowledge. On what grounds, on what basis, do we know something to be true, or think we know? I guess I'm trying to make you aware of a certain process that goes on in your mind, whether you know what's going on or not.

Now this is not just for an exploration into the esoteric, this is for the purpose of getting you to be a critical thinker, to recognize that some of the things you think you know may not, in fact, rest on a very firm foundation, and may not be adequately based, and probably should be challenged, but also so that you won't just accept what somebody else tells you, just because they're smart, or they have degrees, or they're highly esteemed in the religious community, or whatever, whatever reason. You have to recognize that not everything you hear, and not everything you think, is necessarily true. To know all the truth would be impossible.

I mean, what percentage of all knowable things do you think the most intelligent man

can possibly know? He couldn't know one-half of one percent. One couldn't know a thousandth of one percent. There's just too much information out there, and no one could ever hope to know it all.

Fortunately, we don't have to know it all. There are some things that are important to know, and some things that are not as important to know, but the fact of the matter is, no one is an expert on all things. And because we don't know all things, or as Paul put it in 1 Corinthians 13, we know in part.

There are some of the things we might think we know, which, in fact, we'll have to change our minds about as we learn more of what really is true. Now, you might think that that statement is me just setting you up to accept some kind of weird, outlandish viewpoints that I'm going to teach you down the line here, and just trying to make you more gullible, and say you need to challenge everything you think. I make it very clear, you need to challenge what I say.

I don't want you to have any more interest in believing my words than in anyone else's. I'm just another person who has beliefs and opinions about things. My beliefs are based on what I think the Scripture says, but you're going to have to make up your own mind as you hear what I or anyone else tells you.

Anything you read in a book, anything you hear on the radio or TV or from your pastor, or at this school, from any teacher at this school, they're all the same. They're all just people. And people speak with a greater or lesser degree of authority insofar as they appeal to the highest available authority.

The purpose of this series of lectures, as I've already made clear, is to eventually, by the time we're done with the series, to be fully convinced that the Bible is the ultimate, final authority on all matters. But what I would like you to begin realizing is that there must be reasons for saying so. There must be reasons for believing so.

Because there are people who don't believe in the Bible and they believe in something else and they think what they think as strongly as you think what you think. And we are such egocentric beings that, you know, if somebody's got an opinion and we've got an opinion and ours is different, automatically we favor ours. Sometimes for no better reason but that it's ours.

And we prefer ourselves over other people. I mean, that's kind of natural in the fallen self. We need to kind of get over that eventually.

But I don't know if we ever get fully over it. Obviously, if it's a toss-up, and I personally have always thought such and such, and this person raised in a different tradition has always thought something different, all other things seeming equal, I'm going to go with my opinion. Why not? It's me.

How can I believe anything but what I believe? But I want us to get in the habit of being willing at least to challenge what we believe if there is an authority higher than whatever authority we're basing our previous views upon. And there will be times I'm convinced that the highest authority, of course, is always going to be the Scripture, but I think there are times when that will be in conflict with some other religious idea. Maybe even with some interpretation of the Scripture that we hold to.

We'll find that the Scriptures themselves don't support that interpretation of that passage or something. The important thing is that we become conscious to some degree of the process which our mind is going through in reaching conclusions, because once we reach a conclusion, that becomes a conviction of what we consider to be true. At least for the time being.

It can be challenged later if we get more data, but whatever you believe to be true is the sum total of all the conclusions you've drawn from assessing the witness of your experience, the witness of expert testimony, the witness of your teachers, of your parents, of your preacher, of the traditions, whatever. Or of the Bible, of course, that's possibly, hopefully, a major contributing factor. But what I'm going to suggest, and I think you'll see as we go through this series, is that even Christians who read their Bibles and love the Bible and believe the Bible have a great deal of opinions and such that have been adopted unbeknownst to them in conflict with the Scripture.

And the only reason those opinions have found a settled place in them is because they were unaware of the degree to which they were trusting some authority as opposed to some other authority. So we're talking about how our knowledge of the truth depends upon faith in authority. But not all authority is to be trusted.

Some authority is pseudo-authority. Some people claim expertise when they don't have any expertise. Now, as we close the last session, I mentioned, I just gave some examples.

Under Roman numeral three, all knowledge of truth rests upon faith in authority. I gave four examples of what kinds of authorities sometimes our knowledge rests upon. Some of those are real authority and some are not so real.

But they are nonetheless things to which we attribute authority. And therefore we believe it. And therefore we think we know something.

And there will never be any category of knowledge, of any fact or anything you think is fact, that cannot be traced back to your accepting some authority as the witness to that. And most of the time we don't even know what authority we're going on. We don't even know.

You might never have thought before in your life, you know, I believe this because I

believe X, you know, authority. My parents or my own judgment is the authority I'm going by, maybe, from my own experience. Well, this is true not only of our beliefs about what is true, but also our behaviors.

And nothing gets down to where the rubber meets the road as much as this matter of how do I behave every day? How do I react to situations and to people? How do I respond to life and how do I proactively engage the world and society and my environment? I mean, what, what am I supposed to do in other words? Well, everyone has an opinion about what they should do. Some people know that their opinion is tentative and they realize that they don't, you know, they're not real sure what they should do, but everyone is doing something. You did something when you came to this school.

Why'd you do that? You got up this morning, came to class on the time when you were scheduled to be here. Why'd you do that? You had breakfast this morning. Why'd you do that? Why do you do anything? Well, there's a lot of reasons to do things.

But just like it is so that whatever you believe to be true or whatever you know to be true is based on your faith in some authority, likewise, everything you do, every moment of every day, at least every conscious act you do, I'm not saying when you blink your eyes, you're not aware of it, or you're breathing, you're not aware of it, those are involuntary actions, but every voluntary thing you do, everything you make a decision of any kind about, from the smallest thing to the greatest, is done in conformity to some standard that you attribute authority to, believe it or not. Again, this goes on without being aware of it in many cases. But the reason you came to class this morning is probably because you thought you should keep the rules.

Right? I mean, that's the authority of your conscience. Your conscience is your awareness of what's right and wrong. And you say, well, I did sign that paper that said I would come on time, and so the time is now, and I should be there, so I'll be here.

Good. Good choice. Many things you do are done by that internal conviction, that conscience that some things just are right.

I just shouldn't slander this person. I'm not going to get involved in this gossip over here. You know, it's just not right.

I just feel inside that something is not right and something else is right. It's the right thing to do. We are continually acting according to conscience.

And conscience, again, is just the word we give to the process of believing something's good and something's bad. Conscience just means an awareness of moral right and wrong. And so, you know, you don't go out and rob banks.

You know, maybe some of you might have had trouble coming up with the money to

come to the school, but you didn't go out and rob a bank to get it. That would be one option. There's some high school students in Portland who did that kind of thing not too long ago.

They got caught, but you don't do that. Why not? Well, your life in deciding not to do such a thing is conforming to some authority. In this case, it's the authority of your conscience.

Now, your conscience may be that you just grew up... If you grew up without any awareness of the Bible, I mean, if you grew up in a totally pagan home, you still might believe that robbing banks is wrong. You picked it up from the way your parents taught you or something, or maybe you just knew inside that you wouldn't want that done to you. You wouldn't like to be robbed at gunpoint, so you probably shouldn't rob someone at gunpoint.

Somehow you picked up a conviction that that's not the right thing to do, and that orders a great deal of your behavior. More than you know, because, like I said, you know, you didn't rob a bank. Well, you didn't... Until I said that, you probably didn't realize you didn't rob a bank, because it never occurred to you to rob a bank.

But it does occur to some people. Some people rob banks. The reason you didn't is because, all unconsciously, as it were, I mean, you're not thinking about it all the time, but your conscience directs you.

There's things you simply don't even consider doing. And your behavior falls within a certain range of options. But there are other options outside the range that you would consider, because you just would think that unthinkable.

You'd think that's immoral, that's wrong. And you'd be right, in many cases. And so the authority of the conscience is a very strong authority which dominates life.

Sadly, some people don't use their conscience very much. And the Bible actually indicates that we should. The conscience is intended to be something of an authority.

But the Bible makes it clear that the conscience is not a final authority, in this sense. I won't go off on this, although I could get into a lengthy treatment of the Scriptures on the subject of the conscience, but I'll just summarize it this way. The Bible indicates that you can't always trust your conscience, but you can never safely ignore it.

In other words, your conscience may tell you that something is wrong, and your conscience could be mistaken. There are people who think it's wrong for women to wear pants. If they wore pants, they'd be going against their conscience.

Now, is it wrong for women to wear pants? Well, who knows? Obviously, you don't think so. I don't particularly think so, either. But some people do.

Your conscience will permit it, but there are people whose consciences will not. They just feel like it just wouldn't be right for a woman to wear pants. Maybe you've never met those people.

I meet them frequently. And it would be wrong for them to wear pants if they think that way. Because they'd be going against their convictions.

They'd be going against their conscience. Now, their conscience isn't the final authority on all things. Their conscience could be improved on.

Their opinion about whether it's right for women to wear pants could be improved upon, in my opinion. I think they could educate their conscience a little more from Scripture and be a little more free. But the fact is, so long as their conscience is telling them that, they cannot safely ignore it.

If your conscience says, nope, don't do that, that's wrong, then you can't do it, the Bible says. Whoever does that without the clean conscience is sinning. The Bible indicates that in Romans 14, and also over in 1 Corinthians 8. You violate your conscience, you sin.

Even if your conscience is mistaken. That's why it says, Paul talks about people eating meat sacrificed to idols. He says, yeah, there's nothing wrong with eating meat sacrificed to idols, but not everyone thinks that way.

Some people think there is. And for them, it's a sin to do it. That's why you can never safely ignore your conscience.

If your conscience says, I don't think that's okay, then it isn't for you. But at the same time, you can't 100% trust your conscience. You can't say, therefore, because I think it's wrong, it is wrong.

You might be open to some correction. Your conscience could be misinformed. It could be oversensitized.

Or undersensitized. The Bible talks about people who have their conscience seared. That means cauterized.

Their conscience has been so numbed that they can do things that ordinary people would know are wrong, but they don't feel it's wrong. See, that's why you can't trust your conscience completely. But you still can't ignore it safely.

The best thing to do about your conscience is to keep educating it from the Word of God. So that your awareness of what's right and what's wrong begins to conform more and more with what God says and not with whatever you might otherwise think. But the fact of the matter is, conscience dictates behavior in many cases.

When it does, it is an authority. It's speaking to your life and it's determining. It's ruling.

You are submitting to that authority, the authority of your conscience. And in many cases, that's a very good thing to do. Probably in most cases.

There's other authority that might be in your life. It might not even be your conscience. And that can be imposed rule.

If you drive the speed limit, you might do so without having any conviction that it would be morally wrong for you to go twice as fast. But you do, you drive the speed limit anyway. Why? Because there's an authority of law imposed and you do what it says.

Your behavior conforms to that authority in that particular case. If, you know, Linfield College had a sign out that says, keep off the grass. Fortunately, they don't.

They've got a lot of nice grass over there. But if they had a sign that said keep off the grass, we'd assume that that was put there by people who own it and have the right to say so. And we would stay off the grass.

We wouldn't do so because we have a conscience that tells us, you know, standing on grass is sin. I mean, it's not like there's something that would internally tell us to be on the grass is wrong. But we can see an imposed authority.

There's a rule there. There's someone that has the right to say it. Someone who has the right to command it has said it.

And therefore, we conform. That's an imposed rule. It's not internal from the conscience.

It's imposed. Much of our behavior is through submission to such imposed rule and should be, ought to be. That's a legitimate authority.

Once again, just like in the previous list, I gave an authority that doesn't deserve to be listened to, and that's a preference. Also, in this matter of behavior, a lot of times behavior is just done by the submission of the authority of impulse. Now, if it feels good, do it.

It actually can be a rule of thumb for some people. It's not a good one, but some people live by that rule. They submit that rule.

It would be wrong for me to deprive myself of this pleasure when I have access to it. You know, I mean, when you break your diet. I don't suppose any of you have ever done that, but some people do that.

You know, they figure out, you know, I really ought to take off some of this weight. I'll diet, but then, you know, you don't really want to diet all the time. Well, it might be more spiritual.

It's called a fast. When you break your fast prematurely. I've fasted many, many times.

Sometimes I make it all the way to the end. Sometimes I don't. There have been times when I broke my fast earlier than I planned.

Why? Because of my conscience, not usually. Because of some imposed authority telling me to break it? I can't remember any time when that was the case. When I broke my fast, it was because I wanted to.

It's because I had the impulse. And I submitted to the authority of the impulse rather than to this authority of my earlier commitment. It's not good to do that.

But we have to admit that a great deal of behavior is acted out simply in submission to personal impulse as the highest authority in deciding what I'm going to do right now. There might be better authorities telling me to do something different, but my impulse. When I sin, whenever I sin.

And even when I do some things that couldn't really be called sin. Breaking a diet, for example, is not a sin as far as I know. Unless God commanded you to diet, it's not in itself a sin, but it's another case of submitting to the authority of impulse.

It's not a good idea. Certainly self-control, which is a fruit of the Spirit and strongly advocated in Scripture, is the development of a pattern of not allowing impulse to dictate. But submitting to a higher principle, higher authority than impulse.

That's what self-control essentially is. Most people need to learn more of that. So, points number three and four in your notes basically show two sides of the same issue about authority.

Everything you believe and everything you do. Two categories of your life. What you believe to be true or know to be true, on the one hand.

And what you do, what you actually end up doing. Authority always conforms to some authority that you're submitted to or believing in. Whether you're aware of it or not.

If you stop and think about it, you can always define it. You can always discover it. There's always some authority I'm obeying.

And then you say, why? Why am I obeying that authority? And sometimes there's not a very good answer to that question. Now, we're interested as Christians in living according to truth. And therefore, it's important for us to discover the highest authority on every matter.

And make sure we attribute that as the highest authority and submit to that in the way that will result in right thinking and right behavior. Now, I've stated this before, but we come to it now as a point in our notes. Number five, not all sources of authority are of equal weight.

That's already been demonstrated. Preference can be an authority in someone's life, but it's not an equally valid authority to, let's say, expertise. You know, someone might say, I prefer to believe that the moon is made of green cheese.

But if someone has actually been to the moon and brought back samples and said, this isn't cheese, this is a rock. Okay, well, you've got expertise on one hand, preference on another. A kid might want to believe there's such a thing as Santa Claus.

A lot of kids don't want to give up that belief. They prefer to believe it. At some point, though, they have to submit to higher authority, the authority of expertise, of knowledge.

I actually have gained more information on this. There is no Santa Claus. However much I might prefer that there is one.

A lot of people think, these people are not thinking very clearly, but a lot of people think that Christians are Christians because of preference. A lot of people think that Christianity is just wish fulfillment. You know, people who are losers, people who are not happy with this life, they just like to believe there's some satisfaction in another life since they're not going to get any in this life.

You know, just wishing for pie in the sky and so forth. Well, there probably are some cases like that. In fact, the Bible does indicate that losers are attracted to Jesus more than winners.

And that's not something for Christians to be ashamed of. That's just the way God has chosen the foolish things in this world and the weak in order to shame the wise and the strong. But, I mean, there are people who think that belief in Christianity is just preference.

You believe it because you prefer to believe in God. It comforts you somehow. It gives you some kind of, you know, they would say false comfort in the face of scary things in life.

You know, and you just kind of got like an ostrich with a head in a sand preferring to believe there's no danger because there's some kind of big God out there who's going to take care of everything. Well, I can't deny that there's anyone out there who might be Christians for that reason. There could be.

That's not true of me, though. If I was going to choose a belief system based on preference, I don't think it would be Christianity. I believe in Christianity because it's true.

I don't always prefer that it would be true. There are certain moral strictures that Christianity imposes on me that I would just as soon, if I were left to my own

preferences, not have to be confined by. I would very much like to believe there's no hell.

I don't prefer to believe there's a hell. Why do I believe in hell? Because I believe it's true. Because I believe the Bible's true.

Being a Christian should never be, I mean, just because I prefer to be a Christian. Now, some people might prefer to be a Christian just because it keeps them in the crowd that they like to be in. All their best friends are Christians.

They don't want to be excluded. But that's not a good reason to be a Christian. When people say, I'm glad you found something that works for you, you Christian, but I've got something else that works for me, I almost want to scream when they say that because I haven't necessarily, I wasn't looking for something that works for me.

When I became a Christian, of course I was very young, but when I became a teenager and re-examined everything, I was looking not for something that works for me, I was looking for what's true. If I found a truth that didn't make me happy, I would have still wanted to embrace it. A.W. Tozer said something like, if I can have either happiness or truth, give me truth.

I'll have eternity to be happy. In other words, if I can't be happy with the truth now, I still want the truth. I'll have later opportunity to be happy.

Rather than seek happiness now at the expense of the truth, then I'll have eternity to be sad. Truth is more important than happiness. It so happens that when you find the real truth, it's a happy thing.

I mean, the true secret of happiness, I believe, of the human race, is to be aligned with God and truth. But even if it were not so, I would prefer truth over happiness for the time being. Now, not all sources of authority are of equal weight.

Preference isn't equal to expertise or knowledge of the facts, as a decider puts truth. Impulse is not as good an authority as conscience, for example, and behavior. Likewise, when you're seeking to assess different opinions, you've got different sources, different people asserting this or that or the other thing, contrary to each other, not all of those authorities are going to be of equal weight.

They can't be, unless they're all of equally no weight. I mean, everyone can be wrong. When you have conflicting opinions, they can be both wrong, but they can't be both right.

Now, if both are wrong, then maybe both authorities that are speaking are equally non-authoritative. But if one of them is right, and the other options are wrong, which is often the case, then the one who is right is speaking according to correct authority, whatever

authority that may be. When people used to believe... There's still a flat Earth society.

I don't know if they exist more as a joke or what, but there really is today a flat Earth society. People who claim to believe the Earth is flat, and they think that all this evidence that the Earth is round is just a bunch of propaganda. Or there's people who believe that we've never been in space, that no man has ever been on the moon.

There was a movie back in the... I guess it was in the... Must have been in the 70s or early 80s called Capricorn One. Kind of a neat movie for people who are cynical and paranoid like I am. But it was about an attempted launch of a manned spacecraft to Mars, which had never been done, still hasn't been done.

But in the movie, they were actually going to do it. And they had the astronauts all ready, and they were in the capsule. And at the last minute, they secretly pulled the astronauts out of the cable, took them off to some kind of an old hangar in central New Mexico or somewhere like that, and explained to the astronauts... The astronauts were not privy to this, but that at the last minute, they'd found out that the life support systems for the rocket had failed.

And rather than scrap the whole flight, because government funding was tenuous already on the NASA programs, and they didn't want to admit failure, they decided to stage a fake Mars walk. And they blackmailed these guys into participating into... Because these were men somewhat more honest than their superiors, but they were blackmailed by being told their families would be killed if they didn't cooperate. That they had to, in this staged place, which was made to look like Mars, on film, they had to act like they got out of a spacecraft on Mars and waved to friends at home and put up the American flag and so forth.

It was a big hoax. Well, anyway, I won't go into the rest of the plot of the movie. It's very exciting.

But a very objectionable movie with the language is horrible in the movie. But the movie was based on what some people actually think. Not so much about Mars, but about the moon.

You know, when I was a kid, we saw on TV men walking on the moon. But some people say, that didn't really happen. That was all a Hollywood set-up.

People can be fooled by television images, and there are people to this day who sincerely believe that no one's been on the moon. Well, I wouldn't stake my life on the assertion that men have been on the moon, but I believe they were. I mean, frankly, I could be wrong, and it wouldn't embarrass me very much if I was found to be wrong, but I just don't have... The people who are paranoid about it, I just don't think they have any more authority to speak on it than the people who've been there, been interviewed

about it and so forth.

I just assess one authority as having more weight than another. When it comes to flat Earth versus round Earth, I frankly think those who believe in a round Earth have more authority. In fact, I've flown around the world, so I've got a good personal experience there to prove that it isn't flat.

But what I'm saying is you can hear people say all kinds of things, but it's not just a toss-up. Maybe they're all right. No, they're not all right.

The ones that have the most legitimate authority on their side are right, and the ones who are wrong are simply trusting some authority that isn't legitimate. And that's true at almost every level of belief, behavior, probably every level. When we think about believing authorities, and that's what we have to think about from time to time, what authority am I believing? There's two things to keep in mind.

One is that not all testimony is equally expert, or for that matter, equally honest. There are people who will lie to you, and there are people who will not think they're lying, but they simply don't know what they're talking about. But they affirm what they're saying as if they did know.

And you'll find this in many areas. You go to school, go to college, especially a secular college, or even a Christian one probably, you'll find people affirming things very dogmatically as if they know this to be true. And you better be able to learn what they say and repeat it on tests if you want to do well, but you've got to realize they may not be right.

They may think they're right. They may not be trying to deceive them, but they just may not be very expert. I have this happen to me all the time on the radio.

There's people who call up, and they're very adamant about some position they're taking. They're sure it's right, and they say as if it's gospel truth. But I happen to know, I've studied a particular issue, they're talking about it more than they have.

And I know that they're woefully ignorant of certain things. And they're not speaking with authority. They talk as if they had a great deal of authority.

And we need to make sure we don't think that authority is something you feel coming from someone. A dynamic, charismatic speaker can come off very authoritative sounding. Or just the fact that you know a person has a great following or a great number of degrees after his name may simply, you know, he may emanate authority.

You know, wow, you know, whatever he says is fine with me, you know. But that's not faith. Authority isn't something you can feel.

Authority is not the same thing as like an anointing or a power or something in his presentation. Authority means that they are saying they have the right to say it and not be challenged. Now the only way that could ever be true of it is if they're speaking according to this word.

It says in Isaiah 820, if they speak not according to this word, it is because there's no light in them. If there's no light, then they don't know what they're talking about. They may talk very adamantly, very confidently, very authoritative sounding.

But they don't really have any authority because authority isn't a performance. Authority is something that means they really have the goods. They really know what they're talking about and they're telling the truth and what they're saying is true.

And they have the right to say so because they're appealing to the highest authority. In 1 Timothy, we have an example of this referred to by Paul. 1 Timothy 1, verses 6 and 7. I could read verse 5 since this sentence actually begins there.

Might as well. 1 Timothy 1, verses 5 through 7. And now the end of the commandment is love out of a pure heart, and out of a good conscience, and out of faith unfeigned. That means sincere faith.

From which things, some people having swerved, have turned aside unto vain jangling. This is a King James word. It's just nonsense.

Chatter. Verse 7 says, desiring to be teachers of the law, but understanding neither what they say nor whereof they affirm. They don't know what they're talking about.

They want to be teachers. They affirm things to be true as teachers of the law, but they don't know what they're talking about. Now, it's not that they're dishonest.

They just don't have knowledge of their field. They're just ignorant. They're wrong.

But the fact that a person is wrong does not prevent him from being dogmatic. And we need to make sure we don't mistake dogmatism for real authority. I have had the pleasure of debating evolutionists in public debates, not as often as I'd like.

I'd like to do more, but they never can win. And not because I'm a great debater. I don't know that I am, but I have the truth.

And whenever a creationist who has any knowledge of his topic debates an evolutionist, he wins. I don't say that as a prejudiced person. I just say that as someone who's seen plenty of those debates, and there's no question the audience knows who won.

The reason is because evolutionists, they depend on bluffing to win their arguments. If you see any of these debates, you'll see it instantly. The creationist has fact, fact, fact, fact, fact, fact, fact, from the highest authorities in the fields of science and so forth.

I mean, we could just prove from the Bible, if everyone believed the Bible. Most people don't believe the Bible, so when you go to prove creation's truth, it does well to show the facts of, you know, geology and biology and paleontology and so forth. The facts are on our side.

And that's what creationists do in these debates. The evolutionist depends on several other kinds of things to make his point. He depends on ridicule, probably more than any other thing.

The authority of ridicule as a determiner of truth. He depends on largely public consensus. You know, most people believe in evolution, so, I mean, he's got the majority on his side.

And those are mainly the things he depends on. He counts on not being challenged, because most people believe in evolution. And he counts on being able to ridicule creationists without addressing their arguments.

And that's what he counts on. Now, there's no authority in that, and the average thinking person sees that when they watch the debates. The evolutionist doesn't see it, because he's not aware of what authority he's appealing to or not appealing to.

Like most people, he just thinks he's right because he thinks so. Because that's what he believes. Most of these guys, though they have many degrees after their names, they are not even aware of the flimsy basis of the authority of their remarks.

They think they're telling the truth. And they think they're putting it across and proving it, because they resort to these silly non-authoritative authorities, like public opinion. But a thinking person watching has never been deceived in these debates.

It's very clear where the truth lies, because one party is presenting authoritative facts, expertise. The other is just resorting to who knows what. So not all testimony is equally expert.

A person may talk as if he's authoritative and not really be authoritative. You know, it's interesting. In Mark chapter 1, when Jesus was still kind of an unknown character, right at the very beginning of his ministry, and most people who heard him weren't hearing him for the first time.

In fact, at this early stage, they didn't even know of him by reputation. He was just a stranger who came into the synagogue and spoke, and everyone was stunned when he spoke. And the reason they were stunned, according to Mark, I'll tell you, I'll show you what stunned them.

It says in verse 21 and 22, Mark 1, And they went into Capernaum, and straightway on the Sabbath day he entered the synagogue and taught. And they were astonished at his

teaching. For he taught them as one that had authority, and not as the scribes.

Now, they were astonished that he would be so bold as to teach the scriptures as if he had authority. That means the final say as to what this means, how it applies, and so forth. The scribes didn't dare do that.

They just said, well, Rabbi so-and-so believes this, Rabbi so-and-so believes that, and then the Rabbi so-and-so has a third opinion on that, and the scribes didn't know any more than the average person, which opinion was true. They just didn't have any authority. They couldn't speak with authority.

They didn't even attempt to. And Jesus went in and said, well, you've heard that it was said, Thou shalt not murder, and whosoever murders shall be in danger of the judgment. But I say to you, if you're angry at your brother without a cause, you'll be in danger of the judgment.

Now, he talked as if he had the same kind of authority as Moses or more. He talked in a way that alarmed them, astonished them, that he would claim so much authority. But what's interesting is, that doesn't mean they believed at that point that he had the authority.

They recognized that he was talking as if he was very authoritative, but was he? Did he really have that authority, or was he just a boastful, dogmatic guy? Well, a little later, in the same synagogue service, a demon-possessed man began to act up. And in verse 25, it says, Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold your peace and come out of him. And when the unclean spirit had torn him and cried with a loud voice, he came out of him.

And notice verse 27, And they were all amazed, again, in so much that they questioned among themselves, saying, What thing is this? What new teaching is this? For with authority he commands even the demons, and they obey him. Now, notice, initially when they heard him speak, he was speaking as if he had authority, speaking like somebody who's got authority. But they weren't sure.

Does he, or doesn't he? Well, then he cast the demon out, and the demon obeyed him. This guy does have authority. This guy doesn't just talk like somebody who's got authority.

He puts his money where his mouth is. He actually, he tells demons what to do, and they run off screaming. That guy has authority.

This man speaks with authority. It's one thing to talk as if you have authority. It's another thing to really be authoritative.

It's one thing to have the truth on your side. And therefore, we need to be very cautious about believing things we read and hear people say, even if they're good people,

because good people will not try to deceive you, generally. Sometimes even good people kind of shade the truth a little bit for your own good, they think.

But even though most good people won't try to deceive you, some good people don't know what they're talking about. And you can't just say, Well, I believe it because so-and-so told me, and they wouldn't lie. Well, maybe they wouldn't lie, but they might not know what they're talking about.

So you still have to check things out, even if there is some authority that sounds very authoritative. You need to make sure that they are the highest authority on the matter, just like I was talking about the person who thought my car has a bad bearing and the one who thinks I need to rebuild the whole rear end. I mean, one of those people may have a great deal more authority than the other, and I'm going to spend a lot of money, or else not get my car fixed, depending on whose authority I trust on that.

Anyway, there's another thing about this. Not all sources of authority are of equal weight, because not all who give commands are of equal rank. Now, we've talked about authority as governing our thinking and our actions, that everything we believe, we believe on authority.

Everything we do conforms to some authority that we're submitted to. But as I've said, when it comes to believing things, not everyone speaks with equal authority. Not everyone is equally expert or honest, and therefore not everyone can be equally trusted.

Likewise, when it comes to doing things, not all who give commands have equal authority, have equal rank. There are ranks. There are hierarchy of authorities.

And if I give my children a command to do something, and my neighbor also gives them a command to do something. Let's say my neighbor invites my son and says, I want you to go fishing with me this Saturday. And I say to my son, I want you to stay home and help out around the house.

Now, he's got two sets of instructions being given to him. What's he going to do? If he goes by the authority of preference, he'll probably go fishing. But the person who told him to go fishing doesn't have any real authority to tell him what to do.

I do. He has two different orders, as it were, instructions or commands, but not from equal authorities. He must submit to the one who has real authority in his life, not to the other one.

And, you know, the authority of your impulse. It may be a strong draw. It might give strong commands to you.

Your flesh cries out for you to do certain things as if it has the authority to tell you to do it. But the authority of God's Word obviously has to override that. And it has to override

all human authorities, too.

There are government authorities who command to do things that you must not do, because God commands not to. We haven't maybe had to face that as often in this country as people have regularly in other countries. That even happens here, though.

We shouldn't assume that just because the government commands something that you should do it. Now, you might say, well, doesn't the Bible say you should submit to authorities? Yes, to the authorities, when they speak with authority. But you can't submit to a lower authority in violation of the command of a higher authority.

Not all who give commands have equal rank. And certainly Jesus is the King of the kings. The kings may be the kings of us, but he's the king of them.

And if he bypasses them and gives us instructions, they don't have any authority to override his instructions. But many people have submitted to commands, out of intimidation, I suppose, from government agencies, it may be, or from individuals in certain institutions where they have an authority. There may be a legitimate authority that they possess in the institution, but it's not the highest authority in some cases.

Now, I believe and obey in the laws of the land, so long as they are authoritative. But when a law of the land is in conflict with what God says, then I don't believe and obey in the laws of the land in that case. We have, of course, several examples of that in scripture.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, told by the king of Babylon, their king at the time. When the music plays, you bow down to this idol. And they said, no, we're not going to do it.

You're going to be thrown in the fire furnace if you don't. That's fine with us. We're not going to do it.

You have no authority to tell us to do what our God has told us not to do. We'll burn before we'll bow. Daniel is similar.

When they said, if you pray to any god other than King Darius, you're going to be thrown into the lion's den. Daniel, no problem. I got that one figured out.

You don't even have to think about this one. He just kept praying as usual to the real god and didn't pray to the king. They put him in the lion's den.

The apostles were told by the Sanhedrin, the ruling body of Jerusalem, don't preach the gospel anymore. Well, there's a bit of a problem there. Jesus had just told them to preach the gospel to every creature.

Now that someone in authority is saying, don't, what are they saying? Well, Peter said to

them, you know, it's Acts 5.29. He says, we ought to obey God rather than man. Now, Peter was not saying that the Sanhedrin has no authority. That would be quite incorrect.

That would be rebellious. The Sanhedrin did have authority, but they didn't have as much as Jesus had. And therefore, if it comes to obeying you or God, it's an easy choice for us.

We've got to obey God. Because not everyone who issues commands has equal rank. They may have genuine authority, but not as much as someone else.

And no one has as much as God. And if the Bible is the word of God, then of course no one has as much as the word of God has. We'll talk about that more directly later.

So, this is why we can't just trust everyone who talks as if he's authoritative. Who tells you what to do. We've had to tell our children, you don't obey all adults.

It's kind of hard to teach little children that you have to obey your parents, but you don't obey all adults. It's hard for a child not to obey an adult if they're conscientious and want to avoid being intimidated. Adults are big people.

Children are little people. And some adults who could maybe scare them, intimidate them even, might tell them to do things. But if that authority isn't the highest authority in their life, if we've told them not to do something and someone else tells them to do it, then they need to challenge the authority of the person who's a usurper there.

Now, one other thing I want to cover before we get to the authority of Scripture, and we'll just kind of briefly introduce the idea of the authority of Scripture at the end of this lecture, and then we'll go into it in great detail in the remaining parts of this series. But before we get directly to the subject of the authority of Scripture, we need to understand another thing about the concept of authority. And that is that there is inherent authority and there is derived authority.

If you don't normally express yourself that way, I hope that nonetheless the terms are not difficult to understand. Inherent means that it resides there by nature. We understand that there is such a thing as inherent authority.

Remember, authority is the right to determine, the right to control a situation, the right to be unchallenged in one's decisions. That's what authority means. We recognize that the creator of a thing has innate or inherent authority over that thing.

The laws have always recognized this, and if they didn't, our conscience would tell us that. You write a poem, you write a book, you write a song, you draw an original picture, it's your creation. The laws make that official.

You have authority over it. You can get it copyrighted. Copyrighted means no one can do

anything with it except with your permission, because you own it.

You have authority over it. You have the right to decide whether that will be reprinted in this magazine or not, whether that will be sold in this kind of a bookstore or not. It's yours if you have the copyright.

No one can reprint it or use the material in any way that you disapprove of, because you have authority over it. Why? Because you're a creator. You made it.

It didn't exist without you. It came into existence because you wanted it to, and all of your creative expertise brought it into existence. There's just an innate right that you possess to control what you create.

Likewise, we have patents for the same reason. Someone invents a new thing, a new machine that no one thought of before. If they thought of it, they never did it before.

That creator gets a patent on it. That means that no one can abuse it or use it and copy it and make money on it. That person has a basic right or authority over that thing.

Why? Because he made it. Now, it's obvious that God made everything, and that is the basic reason that Christianity teaches God has absolute authority, and no one else does. God created everything.

He also created every person, and because he did so, he has innate, inherent authority. No one has to delegate any authority to him. No one has to authorize him.

He is, by nature, by the nature of the relationship with the creation and the creator, he is in authority, and any violation of his authority is wrongful. In Revelation 4 and verse 11, this reads a little different in the King James than in the New King James, and this happens to be the King James Version. It says, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power, for you have created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.

They exist and they were created for your pleasure, to please you. Therefore, you have the right, you are worthy, to have all power and all control over every situation. You have the authority in this situation because everything was made by you, and it was made for your purpose, for your pleasure.

This is a very important concept for people to grasp. It's probably the most fundamental concept that a person has to embrace to be a true Christian. Sometimes they embrace it instinctively without defining it, but if you don't grasp this, you can't really be what the Bible calls a Christian, that God is the final authority.

He made you, he owns you, and he has the right to be pleased with what you do. That is, he has the right to tell you to do the thing that will please him. He has the right to have

your life conform to the thing he made it for.

If I invented some kind of a tool, maybe for some precise little delicate work, and I had the patent on this, and someone asked if they could make the identical tool, with my permission, to use for some kind of a work that it was not really suited for, something that would be damaging to it, because I would hold the patent, and I could say, I don't think I want it duplicated for that purpose. That's not the purpose I made it for. It's not suited for that.

And God, who made us, has the right to say, I don't think I want you guys murdering, committing adultery, and stealing, and carrying falsehoods. That's not what I designed you for. I designed you for something, but not for that.

I designed you to have pleasure in you, and I don't take pleasure in that kind of behavior. Therefore, I say no. When God says no, that's the final authority.

No one has to authorize him. He is self-authorized. He's the creator.

It says in Psalm 100, verse 3, it says, we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture. It is he that has made us, not we ourselves. We didn't make ourselves.

What's amazing to me is how naturally every person thinks they own themselves. I mean, isn't this really what lies behind the idea of, you know, people ought to be able to commit suicide, maybe with a doctor's help, if they're really miserable. I mean, they're not happy being alive, so they should have the right to end their life.

That would make them happier. But there's a presupposition there that most people never even identified. What is that presupposition? That I own myself, and if I'm not happy with my circumstances, I have the right to bring an end to myself.

Well, that might be true if you owned yourself, but by what means do you think you came to own yourself? Did you bring yourself into existence? No. You had nothing to do with it. You exist because God brought you into existence, obviously through the agency of other people, but still, it's God who creates life.

It's God who opens the womb, and the womb was opened when you were born, and you exist because he wanted you to. There's another dimension to God's authority over you as a Christian, because it says in 1 Corinthians 6 that you are not your own. You've been bought with a price.

Therefore, glorify God with your body and with your spirit, with your goods. God owns you doubly. First, he made you, and if that was all he ever did, he has absolute authority over your life.

But in addition to that, when we rebelled, he bought us back and paid for us. That's

double whammy. There's no getting out from under that authority.

You can rebel against it, you can deny it, you can ignore it, but you can't nullify it. God still is in authority, and anyone who does not conform their life to what God wants them to do is basically a criminal against rightful authority, and will be punished for it ultimately, of course. The Bible takes that for granted.

To become a Christian, one has to have at least some awareness of that assumption that, hey, I'm not my own. Sinning is maybe what I like to do, but what I like to do has no validity, because I don't own me. To use my hands, my feet, my mind, my eyes to do sinful things, that's not my prerogative, because they're not mine, really.

They're owned by another, and he is the one who has the authority to tell me how to use them. Now, God, therefore, has absolute and inherent authority, and it's manifested in many ways. I've given you a list of several.

I won't look up all these scriptures with you. But, it's basically God's having created us is the basis of his sovereignty, and sovereignty means the right to rule also. It means this absolute, unchallenged authority to rule.

And God's sovereignty is manifested in many ways in the Bible. It's manifested in his control over the natural laws. That's when Jesus commanded the wind and the waves, and they obeyed him.

There was proof of authority there. He had authority over them. They listened to him and obeyed him, and they can't even hear.

Pretty good trick to get the wind to listen to you, but it doesn't have any organs for hearing. But that just shows that he had this overarching authority. It existed.

Why? Why did the creation exist? Because God said, let there be light, and there was light. Nothing heard his voice and acknowledged his authority and became something. I mean, that's pretty major authority.

And Jesus, because he was God, demonstrated, as God did in the Old Testament in other ways, his authority over the powers of nature. He made the sun stand still, made the shadow of the sun go backward ten degrees or whatever. And there's a lot of ways in which God shows his authority by showing his control over the laws of nature.

It shows that he is their maker, and they obey him. He also manifests his sovereignty and his control over the demonic powers. We already looked at Mark 1, 27.

There are many other examples in the New Testament of Jesus showing that he had the power to tell the demons what to do, and they had to obey. So much so that his critics actually said, ah, he must be the prince of the demons. Well, that would be one

conclusion someone could wrongly make.

I mean, presumably, if Satan gave orders to the demons, they'd probably obey him, too. But that's not the only explanation. They may be obeying him because he is higher than even Satan in authority, and they have to obey him even more than they have to obey Satan.

And that, of course, is what he demonstrated to be the case. His sovereignty is manifested in his rule over earthly nations and kings. Now, the highest authorities that seem to present themselves in the geopolitical world are kings.

There were a lot of those in biblical times, not so many now. Now we have more democratic governments where people have more self-governing authority. But in biblical times, most countries were ruled by kings, and these kings were sovereign in their own sphere.

They couldn't be challenged in their domain. The only way someone could challenge them would be to overpower them with armies or whatever, but no one could rightfully overthrow their position without violation of law. That's not true in this country.

We can overthrow a president and do so according to the law in some cases. But yet, though kings had absolute authority in their domains, yet God is authoritative over them, and he manifests that in various ways. The scriptures I've given you there, Proverbs 21.1 says, The heart of the king is in the hand of the Lord.

As the rivers of water, he turns it wherever he wants to. God turns the king's heart, turns the king's decision-making powers. God has control over kings.

He's sovereign. Additionally, in Daniel 2 there, in the notes, Daniel 2.21, Daniel acknowledges that God raises up kings, and he brings down kings. The political world is really, in the final analysis, under God's sovereign control.

That doesn't mean that everything that happens is directly caused by God. To say that the heart of the king is in the hand of the Lord, to say that doesn't mean that everything the king does is directly caused by God's hand. But it means that God retains the right and the power to intervene and make the king make a right decision, if God insists that that's the decision that should be made.

Some people actually would say that God controls every decision of every king, but I don't think the Bible supports that. But it does support the notion that no king can avoid making the right decision if God so wishes to turn his heart that way. And that's God's authority being manifest.

God's authority and sovereignty is manifest in his giving and enforcing standards of human conduct. At the end of the Sermon on the Mount, the verses given there in your

notes, Matthew 7, verses 24 through 29, that's where Jesus said that anyone who hears my words and obeys them is like a wise man who builds his house on a rock. Anyone who hears my words and doesn't obey them is like a foolish man who builds his house on sand.

Well, both these houses are challenged by storms and floods and rain and all that stuff. But one of the houses suffers consequences because it is not built on the rock. Now, what is the difference? One is built in obedience to Jesus.

He gives his commandments, whoever hears these things and does them is like the man who has to build the rock. The person who hears these things and doesn't do them is like the guy who has his house on the sand. He's going to suffer the consequences.

God has the right to give orders. And a few verses after that, it says the people were, again, it says they were astonished at his teaching because he spoke as one having authority. He does speak as one having authority.

He says, you do this or suffer the consequences. That's authority speaking. At least that's the sound of authority.

And he, of course, has that authority because he is the creator. And another way that God's sovereignty is manifested is in his having the prerogative. I hope that's a familiar word to you.

It means just the right or the, it's, the choice is his. He has the prerogative in the matter of election. That is, he makes choices.

He chose Abraham not because of anyone twisted his arm. Abraham didn't buy him off or someone didn't have a gun to God's head and said choose Abraham. He just chose Abraham instead of someone else because he wanted to.

That's all. When Abraham's grandsons were in their mother's womb, Jacob and Esau, God chose Jacob instead of Esau. Now, there's not based on anything anyone made him do.

He just did it. He just chose, I'm going to use Jacob, not Esau in this. That is God's prerogative in choosing.

He has the right to choose whatever he wants to choose. If anyone thinks that's not fair, Paul says in Romans 9, verses 20 and 21, Nay, but, O man, who are you to reply against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why have you made me this way? Does not the potter have power over the clay of the same lump to make a vessel, one to honor and another to dishonor? How much authority does the potter have over the clay on his wheel? Total. The clay doesn't have anything to say about how it turns out.

God has that kind of authority. If he wants to choose one nation like Israel and reject

another nation like Edom for the purposes that he wants to use a nation for, that's his business. He doesn't have to give any reason.

He's absolutely sovereign in this matter. I think it's a mistake that many people make when they read this passage that they think that Paul is talking about God choosing individuals to be saved and individuals to be lost, since that doesn't even come up in the discussion. He's talking about God's choice of one nation over another for his temporal purposes throughout this whole chapter.

It can be demonstrated by the Old Testament scriptures that Paul quotes. You look them up. It's always talking about God's choice of the nation of Israel to be the people that he's going to use in history.

He's not talking about eternal destinies. A lot of people in Israel didn't go to heaven. A lot of people who were not Jews did go to heaven.

He's not talking about heaven and hell. He's not talking about eternal life. He's talking about God's use of a nation to fulfill certain historical purposes.

He chose Israel unilaterally, unconditionally, instead of choosing Edom, which was Esau's nation or some others. That's God's sovereignty in action. Now, this next thing we need to understand, and that is authority, though it is sometimes not inherent in certain persons, may be there because it's delegated or it's a derived authority.

My son, who is the oldest child in our home, has no innate authority over his younger brothers and sisters. The fact that he's older doesn't really give him the right to boss them around. He's just a child, just like they are.

He's not one of the leaders of the family. But if I leave the younger ones under his care, and I say, now you obey him, because I'm going to be gone for a while, and I want you to do what he says, suddenly he has authority. That may not be permanent, it may be just for the time I'm gone, but he has authority.

If they would disobey him under normal circumstances, they've done nothing wrong. Under normal circumstances, he has no authority over them. He has no innate authority, like I do.

I'm the father. They came into existence through my direct action. And that is the basis in Scripture for parents having authority over children.

But my son has no innate authority, he has no inherent authority. But if I say, you obey your older brother until I get back, then for them to disobey him is the same as for them to disobey me. Why? Does he have the right to tell them what to do? Of course he does.

Why? Does he inherently possess it? No. It's derived. It is something he's received as a

charge.

I have authorized him. That means given him authority. He's been authorized by someone who does have inherent authority, me.

Now, in a normal situation where my son has no authority over the other children, suppose he says to his sister, the next in line, suppose he tells my youngest children, you obey your sister. Well, do they have to obey her? Of course not. Why? Hasn't she been delegated authority? No, because the person who gave it to her didn't have any authority himself.

He doesn't have authority to delegate to someone else. All authority must come ultimately from inherent authority. But a person with inherent authority can delegate duties, can delegate responsibilities, and can delegate authority to certain persons.

It happens all the time. Every large organization works on that principle. It's what they call a flow chart.

You've got the CEO up here, and then these managers, upper-level managers, they answer to him and do what he says, and then under that there's lower-level managers, and then there's the peons and so forth. This is a recognized phenomenon in life, and it's biblical enough. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 11, he showed that there is such a thing as this.

1 Corinthians 11, verse 3, Paul says, I would have you know that the head of every man is Christ. The head of the woman, in this case, better translated, the wife, is the husband, and the head of Christ is God. Now, what do we have here? Something like a hierarchy.

You've got God, the Father. He's the head of Christ, and Christ is the head of every man. And the husband is the head of the wife.

There's a hierarchy there. This means that the Father authorized Christ, Christ authorized the husband, and the husband authorizes the wife, in whatever realm she has authority. There's a flow of authority there.

Now, some people call that a chain of command. I don't much like the term chain of command, because it assumes that authority means commanding. It can, but unfortunately, in the carnal mind, authority always means giving orders.

The person in authority is the boss. Everyone serves him. Jesus had it all, you know, he turned it all upside down.

He says, no, the one who's really the leader is the one who's the slave of all, you know, who's serving everyone, not having everyone serve him. So, chain of command is

perhaps a descriptive term that works, but I don't much like thinking of authority strictly in terms of commands, since my authority, my home, sure, I have to occasionally give commands, but that's not, I'm not trying to be the big boss. My authority is best exercised if I'm a servant, in whatever area that I have authority.

Jesus himself became the servant of all. He didn't come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many. So, servanthood is really what authority is, but nonetheless, the term chain of command, which some people use, is not inadequate.

It's not inaccurate. There is, I mean, God gives command. God commanded Christ what to do.

Christ commands us what to do. In some cases, a husband gives his wife instructions on what she must do, and both husband and wife can give instructions to children, and there's this flow of actual authority. Now, who has absolute authority in that chain? Really, only God.

Only God has absolute authority, because he's the creator. He innately and inherently has authority over all things, but he can authorize Christ to do this, and of course, Christ was instrumental in creation too, and Christ can instruct men to do this, and men can instruct their wives to do this, and so forth, just so long as it's all agreeable with what the final authority at the top has said. So, there's such a thing as having authority delegated.

God has delegated authority to mankind, to the race, man, woman, children. We all, human beings, have a certain authority over the rest of creation that God has given. We read this in a well-known passage in Genesis chapter 1, beginning with verse 26.

God said, let's make man in our image after our likeness, and let him have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the fowls of the air, over the cattle, over all the earth, over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth. So, God created man in his own image. In the image of God, he created him.

Male and female, he created them. And God blessed them, and God said to them, this is male and female, not just the man, be fruitful, multiply, replenish the earth, subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, over every living thing that moves upon the earth. Now, man, woman, there weren't any children yet, but humans, in other words, the human race, has been delegated a certain authority of dominion.

Now, the fish of the sea, the fowls of the air, the beasts of the field, who was in authority over them before man came along? Well, God was. God made them. He was their authority.

But when he made man, he says, okay, from now on, I want you to take authority over this matter. You cultivate this earth. You grow the crops.

You tame the animals. You domesticate the animals for your purpose. You maintain this thing for me.

I'm going to give you authority over this realm. And so God delegated authority to man. Now, man has authority delegated from God, but God is still the final authority.

Our authority is derived. Do I have authority over my dog? I do. I can train it.

I can make it pull a sled for me if I want to. It can't make me do what it wants. Not legitimately.

It can't rule over me, but I can rule over it. That's just an authority that I have, but it's not innate. I didn't create that dog.

God did. I have a derived authority. And as such, I'm supposed to use it in the way that God would use his authority directly if I weren't a middleman.

I'm not to abuse any more than God would abuse the thing. When you have authority delegated to you, you become the agent of the person who authorized it. You act as they would act, preferably.

That's what the idea is. And so this is how God governs the creation to a large degree. He's given Christ, he's delegated to Christ all authority in heaven and earth.

It says in Matthew 28, 18. And there are many other scriptures that have given him their notes that say the same thing. Jesus basically has been given a position by his Father higher than all others.

He's been given a name above every name, that every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. He has been made head over all things to the church, it says in Ephesians. Those verses are there in your notes.

I won't look at all of them with you right now. But the point is, God has innate authority, inherent authority, and he has delegated all authority, not some of it, all of it, to Christ. So Christ now has all authority just like his Father does.

So it is implied that he derived it from his Father. It is given to him. He himself said, all authority in heaven and earth has been given to me.

That's a delegation. But then Jesus delegated authority, for example, in the church. He said to the disciples, as the Father has sent me, I'm sending you, apostles.

And the apostles are therefore given some kind of authority from him, in the same sense that the Father gave him some kind of authority. Now if they wrote the Bible and they say do this, then obeying what they say is the same as obeying Jesus, isn't it? He authorized them and God authorized him. So this is how we understand delegated

authority.

As you read the scriptures, you'll find that there's various ways in which authority is delegated. Usually, authority that is derived exists in the context of some institution, the family, the church, the state, maybe some corporation, some organization. People have, you know, there's a president or a dictator or something.

There's someone in charge in most institutions. I can't think of any institutions where there's no one in charge. And within the context of certain institutional frameworks, there are delegated authorities.

In the home, we've already seen. Husband and wife, they have authority over the children. Between the two of them, the husband is the head of the wife.

That's something God ordained, God commanded. And it's a delegation of authority. In the church, God has ordained the apostles.

As I showed you a moment ago, he ordained the apostles to be the leaders as he was ordained by his father. So what they teach is the final authority for the church, as well as what Jesus taught directly, of course. In government, there are positions of authority.

In biblical times, they were kings. It says over in Romans chapter 13 that all authority that exists is from God. And if you resist the authorities, you're resisting God or the ordinance of God.

I might just add that things are considerably different, of course, in terms of most governments today and governments in biblical times for the very reason that in a monarchy, which was the normal form of government or tyranny, monarchy or authoritarian, autocratic government, the ruler was essentially above the law. He was the law. And as such, everyone had to obey him because he was in authority.

That was the way the government stood up. Most governments today, with some exceptions, at least at this point, most western governments, and that's where we live, we don't have a king. There isn't some man who has absolute authority in this system.

In this institution of government, the authority rests elsewhere. Theoretically, it rests with the people. It's a government of the people, for the people, by the people, and so forth.

And the way it works out, sometimes elected officials who are supposed to be public servants, the word servant is supposed to mean something, but the people who are elected by the real rulers, the voters of the rulers, supposedly, they elect servants to serve their interests in the government. See, it's an upside-down situation, not a king up there with a bunch of servants. The kings are all down here, and the servants are the ones elected to make decisions according to the wishes of their rulers, the people who

elected them.

But human nature being what it is, it seldom works out that that government functions the way it's supposed to. But in terms of actual authority, for example, the president of a country like a modern democracy doesn't have authority, even legally, doesn't have authority that resembles that of a king. He sometimes may forget that, but whether he forgets it or not, we don't have to forget it.

We are not obligated to submit to somebody in a role of authority that they don't really possess legally. But there is such a thing as authority. I mean, the authority of the voters, the majority of the people, if they vote in a certain policy, then we kind of have to submit to that because it becomes official.

Unless, of course, it falls outside their legitimate sphere. And that's one thing I need to get to here. Point number C, near the bottom of the page.

God has delegated authority to human beings, but there's three points under that. I've already mentioned point number one. This manifests in a variety of offices and institutions, like the state and the family and the church.

These are institutions where there is derived and delegated authorities. But two other points, very important, that many people don't know. All such derived authority is subordinate and subject to God's authority.

In other words, a person who has derived authority cannot have more authority than the one who authorized him. Can't be. It even says that, I think, over in 1 Corinthians 15, if I'm not mistaken.

The scripture says that all things are put under Christ's feet. But then Paul says, of course, when it says all things, obviously it excludes the one who put all things under his feet. In other words, to say that all things are put under Christ's feet, we don't mean to imply that the Father, too, who put everything under his feet, is under his feet.

I mean, there's one exception. The one who authorized him is the one who's not under his authority. And that's important to realize because God is the only inherent authority in the universe.

He made everything and he's the only one who by nature possesses the right to rule everything. And any other authority that exists is derived. He has authorized kings, he's authorized parents, he's authorized the apostles and leaders and so forth.

He has authorized certain officers and so forth according to scripture. But they are not authorized to violate his wishes. They don't have greater authority than he does.

If he gives general commands, they can't give contrary commands and expect to have

any authority. And therefore, all authority is subject to God. We read a moment ago, 1 Corinthians 11, 3, the head of every man is Christ.

That means the head of the king, too. The head of every man is Christ. No man, no human, has authority above that of Christ or can really claim to be acting in authority when he's in opposition to Christ outside of what Christ has authorized him to do.

But another point similar to this, it's an upshot from it, is that all such derived authority is limited to a particular sphere. This concept should not be too hard to grasp. A sphere, you know what a sphere is.

A literal sphere is just like a ball-shaped thing. But when we speak figuratively of a sphere, we're speaking of a realm or a range of activity. And outside that sphere, there is no activity to a certain person.

Now, if I say that I've derived authority from God, God has authorized me to have authority over my children. Well, my family, my household, my children, that's my sphere. Within that sphere, anything that falls in that sphere, whether it's my four children I have now, or if we have ten more children, or if we have fourteen children, they're all within that sphere.

And my authority extends to all of them, because they are within that sphere. But my neighbor's children aren't in that sphere. If I tell my son to mow the lawn, he'd better do it.

If I tell my neighbor's son to mow my lawn, he doesn't have to do it. Why? To my son, I'm in authority. God authorized me to have authority, and he's in my sphere.

God hasn't authorized me to tell that kid what to do, and therefore I'm just another guy to him. A person can only operate genuinely in authority insofar as they are within their proper sphere. Outside that sphere, they're just another person without any authority.

So that in this school, for example, this is a corporation, a school. I'm not sure I like that anymore, but years ago when we set up, we set up that way, and we have a board of directors, and I'm the executive director of the school. And therefore, I don't have absolute authority, because I have this board that I answer to and so forth, but I'm a member of the board, so I have some authority.

On the ground sphere, there's no one else who's a board member who's here. I have the most authority of anyone here on the property as far as, well, what are we going to do this year with the school? And I have the right to say, okay, let's sell the property. Let's sell this school.

I'd like to move somewhere else, have the school somewhere else. Or I have the right to say, let's not even have a school this year. I can do that.

Or I can delegate it, or I can say, I think I'll have Steve Bray lead the school this year. And now he has as much authority here as if I were leading it myself, because I've delegated it. But I can do that within the realm of this school, because this is a particular sphere where my authority in this matter is valid.

But if I would say, okay, the Mennonite Church, I think we're going to close it down. I think we're going to sell the property. I can't do that.

I don't own it. I'm not even on the board there. I'm not even related there.

I mean, that's outside my sphere. I might have absolute authority in some ways in a sphere here, but you step outside that sphere to some other organization, I'm just another guy. I could walk in there.

I'm just like anyone else. I don't have any authority there. And we need to understand that this is a very important thing in connection with our submission to authorities.

Some years ago, in the mid-70s, some of you were just babies then if you were even born then. I was in my early 20s, I guess. I was actually in my teens and 20s, in the 70s.

But there was a movement in the charismatic movement, a very widespread thing, called the shepherding movement. And the shepherding movement was essentially an emphasis on what the teachers of it called God's kingdom order, that God has authorized elders, for example, to be the heads of the church, to be the rulers of the church. Frankly, I think that they've misunderstood entirely what the Bible teaches about elders, but that was their starting point.

They believed that God had authorized elders of the church to be the rulers of the church. And the Bible says, Obey those who have the rule over you. Over in Hebrews chapter 13, Obey those who have the rule over you.

And submit yourselves. And the Bible said, all authority is from God and whoever resists the authority is resisting the ordinance of God. Romans 13.

And they throw in usually something out of 1 Samuel 15, 20-something, where it says, Rebellion is the sin of witchcraft. That was always a good one to keep people from rebelling against their leaders. And eventually this became a real authoritarian movement.

And it eventually got, you know, it fell into total disgrace and was renounced. And every charismatic leader distanced themselves from it, and so forth. But at one time, it was really infiltrating the charismatic movement.

I know. I was there. I was in it.

I never embraced it. But I was in a charismatic church before it came, and then it came,

and I went out shortly afterwards because I didn't like it and I didn't think it was biblical. But what actually happened in this movement, in some sectors, it was national, it was actually international.

The leaders were in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, five guys who were kind of like the head hunters of the whole organization, but, our movement. But basically, these people eventually decided that since God had authorized the elders to be leaders of the church, and the rest of us, they were the shepherds. It was called the shepherding movement.

They were the shepherds of the sheep and we're the sheep. Everyone who's not a shepherd is a sheep. Therefore, the elders had absolute authority.

And it really came to this, I saw it many times, that if the elders didn't approve of you marrying someone, and this, I mean, it's one thing if they don't approve because that person's a non-Christian and you're a Christian, I mean, they have biblical grounds to object, but they just don't think that's the right person for you and they don't give their permission. If you marry them anyway, you're in rebellion. That's like the sin of witchcraft.

You're excommunicated. And the fear of that happening caused people to really buckle under. You couldn't change jobs without elders' permission.

You couldn't sell your house and move to another one. In many cases, believe it, this is not extreme. You know, the elders had the sheep washing their cars and coming mowing their lawns for them because, and there's this fear factor.

You know, well, God tells us to submit to authority and these guys are authority and whatever they say, I guess I have to do. And that was very widespread in the mid-seventies. It still exists some places but it's not very widespread now, fortunately.

But the misunderstanding there was in this point, and what is the sphere of authority? Has God given elders authority in the church? Apparently. The Bible seems to indicate that He has. But does that mean they have the authority to tell me who I can marry, what job I can work at, what I can do on my weekend, whether I should wash their car or wash mine? No, that's not within their sphere.

The sphere of an elder's authority has to do with watching out for the souls of the sheep, making sure that they don't wander off into sin and into error and heresy and so forth. Make sure the wolves don't come and get them. It has nothing to do with micromanaging every area of their lives that's not inside their sphere.

And that is the mistake. And governments do the same thing. That's where, you know, tyrants, you know, they decide that they are God.

They decide that they have not been delegated authority from God. They are God. They

believe they have absolute authority and everyone should do everything they say or pay the consequences.

Well, the fact is that God has authorized governments, but not for everything. It says very specifically in Scripture, the very same Scriptures that tell us that God has authorized government tells us what the limits are of the government's sphere. I have to wind this down pretty quickly, but let me show you something here.

Romans 13. This is the best known passage in the New Testament about God setting up, you know, the authority of the state and delegating authority to the leaders. It says, Let every soul be subject unto the higher authorities or the leading authorities.

That's verse 1. It says, For there is no authority but of God. And the authorities that are are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resists the authority resists the ordinance of God.

And they that resist shall receive to themselves condemnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. That begins to put some definition on it here.

Wilt thou then not be afraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you shall have praise from the same. For he is the minister or servant of God, that is, the state official is the servant of God, ordained by God, for what? For your good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain.

For he is the servant of God, that's where the word minister means servant, he is the servant of God, an avenger, to execute wrath upon the one who does evil. God has ordained the government to execute wrath on people who do evil. That's what they are to do.

Do they always do that? Not always. But they are not authorized to do anything else but that. Look over at 1 Peter 2. There are essentially two major passages that discuss this.

There are a few others that have short statements relevant to it. But 1 Peter 2, verses 13 and 14. 1 Peter 2, verses 13 and 14.

Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether it is to the king as supreme, or to governors, as unto them who are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of those who do well. 1 Peter 2, verses 13 and 14. Now notice, we are to submit to kings and governors and so forth.

Why? They have authority, they have been authorized by God. For what? To praise those who do well and to punish evildoers. It says it again, the same thing Paul said in Romans.

That is to say that God has authorized government officials to uphold justice. To encourage good behavior and to punish bad behavior. Well, that is what governments

are for, and to a certain extent that is what a lot of governments attempt to do.

The problem is there are times when governments actually get so corrupted that they punish good behavior and praise bad behavior. And then the dilemma for the Christian is, am I supposed to submit to this? I mean, we have not faced this as bad as some countries have. What if it was forbidden for Christians to meet together? What if it was forbidden to own Bibles? What if it was forbidden to preach the Gospel? This is the case in many parts of the world and has been throughout history.

And if it is the government that is forbidding this, what shall the Christians do? Shall they obey? Brother Andrew, who is known as God's smuggler, many years ago, in addition to his book *God's Smuggler*, he wrote a book called *The Ethics of Smuggling* because he received a fair bit of criticism from Christians because he smuggled Bibles into closed communist countries that it was illegal to take Bibles into. And Christians said, don't you know you're supposed to obey the authorities? And he said, well, yeah. Jesus is the highest authority.

He said, take the Gospel to every creature. If governments tell us we can't do that, they're acting outside their sphere. God hasn't authorized them to give those kinds of orders.

And just like me, if I give my neighbor commands, they're not in my sphere, I'm just another guy trying to act authoritative against them. They don't have to listen to me at all. I'm just an ordinary guy.

If the government starts to give commands that are outside the sphere that they have, they're not to be listened to. They're no authority. They're just another guy trying to boss you around.

Now, how does this apply to knowing truth? Well, a great deal. Most of the examples I've just been giving about government and family, institutional examples and so forth have more to do with behaviors and obedience and things like that. But when it comes to knowing truth, it's sort of the same way.

If we are to decide what is true, we will listen to somebody who hopefully has authority and hopefully we will listen and we will credit that authority properly and say, okay, I recognize there's authority there. But it will not, as I said earlier, it will not be because they act authoritative. It is because they truly are speaking with a genuine derived authority.

If a teacher, whether it is me or anyone else, happens to speak with authority, it will only be because that teacher is speaking according to this word. God is the absolute authority. God's word, therefore, is an absolute authority in our lives.

And whoever speaks according to the word is carrying forth that authority of the word to

the people. And if you listen to somebody who preaches the word, if it is a faithful and true representation of the word, that person has authority and should be believed. But only in so far as what they're saying is scriptural.

That's why it says of the Bereans in Acts chapter 17, they were more noble than the Thessalonians because the Bereans, when they heard Paul preach, they were more noble. They searched the scriptures daily to see if these things were so, and then they believed it because they found that, sure enough, he was speaking as he should according to the scripture. I mentioned a moment ago in Hebrews it tells us to submit to the authority of leaders in the church and so forth, but it's qualified, very strongly qualified. It says in Hebrews 13, 7, Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God.

Whose faith follow considering the end of their behavior. And then in verse 17 it says, Obey them that have the rule over you and submit yourselves for they watch for your souls as they that must give an account. Now, twice it talks about those who rule over you here in this chapter.

Hebrews 13, verses 7 and 17. It's these verses that the shepherding movement used to try to say you need to do everything your elders say, but verse 7 tells us what he's talking about. Remember and obey those who have the rule over you who have spoken the word of God to you.

It's the word of God that you're obeying, not them. If they are speaking according to this word, there's light in them and you should walk in that light. If they're not speaking according to this light, this word, there's no light in them.

And therefore you should not walk according to what they say. It is the authority of Scripture that makes authoritative what any preacher or teacher says. And by the way, don't just assume that because a preacher quotes a lot of Bible verses, he's right because he may be misunderstanding or misusing them.

The Bible verses can be twisted to the advantage of some agenda, but the point is you need to learn how to think, read, study, and responsibly acknowledge what the Scripture says so that you can be submit to its authority whether you get it directly from reading the Bible yourself or whether somebody else shows it to you or talks it to you. The authority they have is only really there if they are submitted to the absolute authority. Then they are within their sphere as teachers of the Bible.

Let me just close by making this last point. Point number seven in your notes. And that is that the Scriptures, although they were written by human hands, were written by holy men of God who were moved by the Holy Spirit to write God's words.

We're told this in 2 Peter 1 verses 20 and 21. Also many other ways. We're told that by

the many times in Scripture when the writer said thus saith the Lord, the word of the Lord came, hear the word of the Lord.

I mean these kinds of statements appear 4,000 times in the Bible. Obviously the writers are claiming they're hearing from God. If these claims are true, then the Scriptures that they wrote are not the words of man.

They don't come from human opinion. They come from God. And obviously if that is the case, then the Scriptures themselves are the final authority on all matters of truth.

Jesus said in John 17, 17, as he was praying to his father, he said, Sanctify them by your truth, your word is truth. If you want to know what the truth is, of course Jesus is the truth, but he is the word also. The word of God is the truth.

And if the Scriptures are the word of God, then they become the final decider of what is true. The next task is to decide whether we have a responsible reason to believe that they are the word of God. And that will be coming up in our next lecture.