

PASTORAL AUTHORITY



L. R. SHELTON

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P. O. Box 1810
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(225) 664-8658**

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**Radio Missions
First Baptist Church of Algiers
P. O. Box 1810
Walker, LA 70785**

Website: <http://www.radiomissions.org>

Pastoral Authority

THE greatest blessing that can come to any church is for God to send them a born-again pastor, called, commissioned, and anointed by the Holy Spirit, who will be true to the souls of men and speak with the authority of God's Word to their hearts. The greatest curse God can inflict is to send you a hireling, an unsaved pastor who does not know how to be true to your soul with the Word of God. Very few churches today know anything about the voice of authority from the pulpit, as the average preacher has lost, if he ever had, the voice of authority. From my experience and observation very few pulpits today know anything about PASTORAL AUTHORITY. The average preacher's hands are tied by some ruling authority in the church, whether it is a board of deacons, stewards, elders, or some individual who has slowly grown into power, or some woman, or the pastor's wife. Thereby he is shackled and he is unable to speak and preach and direct the church with the voice of authority. In his preaching or leadership he always has to keep in mind this ruling element that has grown up inside the church and has gotten the upper hand of the church. When the pastor crosses their wills, it almost certainly means that he must move on to another field of labor. When we study the life of the Apostle Paul, we find what it cost him to preach

and teach with PASTORAL AUTHORITY.

We see in studying this letter to the church at Thyatira in Rev. 2:18-29, that there had risen up in that church a woman by the name of Jezebel who slowly took over pastoral authority and began to teach contrary to the Word of God. She did not take over all at once. It was a slow growth, and God had to intervene in judgment to correct that error, because He said He gave her time to repent, but she willed not to repent. Therefore, judgment fell upon her. Sometimes God delivers such a situation in the church by mercy. Other times, by judgment. If and when the attention of individuals is called to the fact that they have assumed that voice of authority, and they repent, God forgives them and restores harmony in the church. Then the pastor can speak with the voice of authority as he could not speak otherwise. But if an individual chooses not to repent, then the only hope for deliverance is judgment. If the pastor sees the situation when God opens his eyes and will step into the breach with the sword of God's Word, God will lead him to victory, whether He answers by judgment or by mercy.

With our Bibles in hand, let's turn to II Tim. 4: 1, 2 and read our text:

"I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick (living) and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; PREACH THE WORD; be

instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine."

Let's first notice the position of God's minister in the pulpit. In Rom. 1:1 he is called GOD'S BONDMAN or servant. God's minister is not a servant of the church; he is a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, he ministers to the people over which God hath made him overseer (Acts 20:28). A deacon or steward or elder is a servant of the church, but God's pastor is a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Then God's minister is called A BISHOP. Paul says in I Tim. 3:1,

"This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work."

The word "bishop" means an overseer. So God's pastor is an overseer, as Acts 20:28 says,

"Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers (bishops), to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood."

The pastor, being a bishop is to watch over the flock to see that no wolves enter the flock, that no false doctrine is preached, that no error is taught. In other words, he is to guard the Truth. He is to protect his people against all false doctrine and to warn them against sin of every description. He must not fail to preach the whole counsel of God unto them (Acts 20:27).

Another position of God's minister in the pulpit is that of A PASTOR, which means, he is an undershepherd. Being the servant of the Lord Jesus Christ, he is the undershepherd of the Lord, and is given to the assembly as a pastor, according to Eph. 4:11,12,

"And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ."

Many times the office of a pastor is combined with the office of an evangelist, and he is called as pastor-evangelist, not only to lead and to feed God's people, but to walk with Christ in seeking the lost and bringing them into the fold. The individual who sees only one side of that truth, that the pastor is only to feed the flock and does not see the other side, that of the evangelist in seeking the lost, is blinded, and great is their darkness!

The pastor is to lead the flock, not to bribe them. They are led by his voice, that voice of authority from the pulpit, through the press, by word of instruction in the home or in the classroom. Paul said in I Cor. 11:1,

"Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ."

In leading God's flock, the pastor is to interpret to them all Christian experiences of grace in the believer's heart. This he can do only as he ex-

periences grace in his own heart. Paul's preaching is nothing less than the interpretation of Christian experiences of grace in his own heart. Paul was always saying, "I know," or "We know." The preacher who is always speaking in the third person has no voice of authority. It must be personal.

Then, another position of God's minister in the pulpit is that of AN ELDER. The word "elder" means "ruler." Therefore, the pastor is the governor or ruler of the church, and as the ruler he is to speak with the voice of authority based upon God's Eternal Word. I Tim. 5:17 says,

"Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine."

Paul commanded Titus in Titus 1:5 to set everything in order in the churches and to ordain elders in every city. If you will study closely the New Testament churches, you will find that wherever the word "elder" is used, it is almost always in the plural; that is, a church had elders, and they were to be looked upon as speaking and teaching with authority. Remember one thing, God leads His people through His appointed, commissioned, and anointed minister. The average church today, that I know of, knows very little about PASTORAL AUTHORITY. God does not lead His church through some woman, not even the pastor's wife.

Now let's notice in what manner the pastor ex-

presses the voice of authority. First, he is charged before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the living and the dead at His second coming to "PREACH THE WORD" (II Tim. 4:1, 2). He is not to preach his opinion or his idea or what Mr. So and So says, but he is to preach the Word from the first verse of Genesis to the last verse of Revelation. He is to preach, "Thus saith the Lord." He is to stand before God's people, whether in the pulpit, over the air, in the home, or wherever he may be called on to preach. He is to do it, not with enticing words of man's wisdom or persuasive words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power. If you will notice in reading your Bible, you'll find expressions like these, "Thus saith the word of the Lord," or "The word of the Lord came unto me," or "We say unto you by the word of the Lord." The voice of authority of every one of God's ministers is based upon "Thus saith the Lord." We are to preach the whole counsel of God with Christ as the Center of every doctrine and every teaching. The Bible was given to us to reveal the Redeemer, and our preaching will be with authority when we exalt Him above every name, whether in earth, sea or sky.

We are further charged in preaching the Word to be instant in season and out of season. We are to preach the Word under the power of God's Holy Spirit and leave the results with Him. We are charged under oath to "reprove, rebuke, and

exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine." Let's notice those three words: First, we are to so preach the Word as to reprove our hearers. That word "REPROVE" means "to convince or to convict our hearers of their lost, ruined condition before God." We are to so preach the Word until it reveals to human hearts that they are rejected. They are censured; that is, they have nothing that will commend them unto God. We are to so preach with authority as to lay the blame on every heart, to express blame, to prove that man is wrong inside out and outside in. We are to stand fearlessly, courageously, and uncompromisingly before man, preaching the Word until human hearts are so illuminated by the Word under the power of the Holy Spirit that men and women will see themselves as they are, without Christ, without hope, going to the devil's Hell that they deserve, and they will write condemnation over their entire lives. What a grave responsibility rests upon the heart of God's ambassador! The opposite of reprove is to praise, flatter, commend, or extol. How many preachers build their churches on flattery, or by praise and commendation! Any preacher who will flatter a soul to bring him in as a member of the church is not only a deadly enemy of that soul, but is a hireling, and knows nothing about Christ himself.

Another manner in which God's minister is to express the voice of authority is by rebuking individuals with the Word of God. The word "REBUKE" means to "check," that is, to stop an

individual who is travelling in the wrong direction. It means to so preach the Word of God that the individual may be turned back from the wrong path he is travelling. It means to restrain that individual from sin. It means to criticize him severely with the Word of God. It means to reprimand an individual for a fault or an error. The Scripture says in Prov. 9:8,

"Rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee."

Any individual who loves the truth of God's Word, when he is rebuked by God's minister, will love him for it. In I Tim. 5:20 God's minister is commanded:

"Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear."

This literally means to call the individual's name if need be, and to rebuke him personally before the church for his sin, that others may fear. Then in Titus 1:13 God speaks to His minister in these words,

"Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith."

Here he is called to stand firmly against all error, and false doctrine, rebuking individuals for giving a listening ear to such doctrine, that they may be sound in the faith or the body of Divine truth.

Then the Holy Spirit goes just a little bit farther, and in Titus 2:15, charges God's minister in these words,

"These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man de-

spise thee."

God's minister is never to allow himself, by the grace of God, to be put on the defense, but he is always to speak the Word of God WITH ALL AUTHORITY that men will be made to respect him, even though they may hate him. There is no midway ground. There is no place for compromise. We are charged before God and the Lord Jesus Christ to speak the Word of God with all authority. We are to speak God's message without favor, to men as they are.

In this charge that God gives His minister, he is not only to preach the Word so as to reprove or rebuke, but he is also to EXHORT his hearers. The old Methodist church used to have what they called exhorters. After the preacher had delivered his message, then the exhorter would stand there and apply the message to the hearts of the hearers. To exhort, means to encourage the individual to listen, and to apply the Truth to his own heart. To exhort, means to incite, or stir up, the heart of the individual by words of advice, that is, to stir him up to a point of action. It means to urge strongly, to lay the Truth upon the heart of the individual. It also means to advise, to warn the individual to turn from his evil way and turn his feet unto the testimony of the Lord. And the exhorter is to do this under the power of the Holy Spirit with all authority, with longsuffering, with one thought in mind - to win that individual to a complete surrender unto the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now let's go just a little farther and note what the Bible says should be the attitude of the assembly in respect to pastoral authority. The attitude of individuals toward God's minister reflects the spiritual condition of their heart. The Bible is very plain and definite and positive about how individuals should treat God's ambassador or God's minister. According to God's Word in I Thess. 5:12, 13, they are to come to know their pastor and to esteem him, or evaluate him, very highly in love for his work's sake. Listen to God's Word:

"And we beseech you, brethren, to KNOW them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. And be at peace among yourselves."

We could put it in these words: Come to know those who labor among you, that is, recognize them for what they are. Acknowledge and appreciate and respect those who reprove and rebuke and exhort you. Study your pastor, find out about his problems, his heartaches; come to know his likes and dislikes. To do that, fellowship with him, meet him in the prayer room, in his home, his study. Visit with him as the Lord leads you. He is "a man subject to like passions" as you are. The more we come to know each other, the better we will understand each other and appreciate each other and evaluate each other in the Lord.

In Heb. 13:7 we have this admonition:

"REMEMBER them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God."

The question arises, "How are we to remember those who have the rule over us?" Let's remember always to speak kindly of them. Let's not be critical toward them. A saved person will not fight his pastor. Let's remember to hold up his hands, to respect him and the office he fills, and the place he occupies as the mouth-piece of Jehovah. Remember him when he is in trouble, or going through great trials. Help him to carry the load; find ways and means of cheering his heart along the pathway of life as he breaks the Bread of Life and stands true to the souls of men. Remember him kindly before your children. Find out his needs and help to supply them as you have opportunity.

Then in Heb. 13:17, we find these words,

"OBEY them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you."

First, "know them;" second, "remember them;" third, "obey them that have the rule over you" and be submissive, because they watch for your souls and then, they must give an account unto God of your attitude toward them. I must stand before the Judgment Bar of God and give an account of the attitude of every hearer who listens

to me preach. Will I do it with joy or with grief? If you continually recognize the authority over you of God's messenger who watches over your soul and guards your spiritual welfare, then I can give an account unto God with gladness and joy. Otherwise, I will give an account with grief which will be unprofitable for you. Let me say again, your attitude toward God's messenger manifests the spiritual condition of your heart. If you do not recognize his authority and submit yourself unto the preaching of God's Word, it shows that you do not know Christ. The Scripture says, "He that is of God heareth God's Word" (John 8:47).

Now, in the fourth place, we find in Heb. 13:18 that every member of the assembly is enjoined to pray for God's anointed,

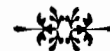
"Pray for us: for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly."

Every one to whom he preaches is commanded to pray for God's messenger. Pray that God will give him wisdom and knowledge and an understanding heart to know the Scriptures. Pray that God will anoint him for every message, that God will be with him in every trial, will comfort him in every heartache. Pray that God will take the message home to every hearer. Pray that God will supply his every need. Pray that the message will go home to your own heart. Pray that the Word of God will not be bound, that he'll preach with freedom and in the demonstration of

the Holy Spirit and of power. Pray daily for him, that he'll not be led into temptation. Watch over him in prayer.



Faithful ministers do represent the person of the King of kings, and Lord of lords. And though the world crown them with thorns, as it did their Lord and Master before them, yet God will crown them with honour. THEY SHALL SHINE AS THE STARS IN THE FIRMAMENT. You know, ambassadors have not preferments while they are abroad; but when they come home to their own country, then their princes prefix them, and put much honour upon them. So will God deal with His ambassadors.



As a messenger of the Gospel, I have received a message which must be delivered, must not be changed, and must not be delayed.



"I preach as never sure to preach again, and as a dying man to dying men." —Richard Baxter

