

Submission and Control

Martyn Shenstone

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SUBMISSION AND CONTROL
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***Special thanks to all my faithful partners
who have supported this ministry.***

***Every life that is changed by reading this
book, has been changed by you and
I working together.***

*And my God shall supply all your need according to
His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.*

*Now to our God and Father be glory forever and
ever. Amen.*

Philippians 4:19-20

Chapter 1

All Authority is from God

For there is no authority except from God.

Romans 13:11

It has been said that since all authority is from God, as Romans 13 plainly says, then anyone in a position of authority must have been placed there by God; Therefore any person in a place of authority should always be submitted to. Moreover, opposing such authority is a rebellion against God since He established the authority in the first place - right?

Be diligent to present yourself approved to God... rightly dividing the word of truth.

2 Timothy 2:15

If we are commended to rightly divide the word then obviously it must also be possible to wrongly divide it.

When the devil tempted Jesus in Matthew 4:5-7, he suggested that Jesus jump off the top of the Temple and quoted Psalm 91:11-12 about how the angels would catch him so that he wouldn't even dash his foot against a stone. Jesus rebuked the devil by speaking another scripture from Deuteronomy 6:16 saying, *you shall not tempt* (foolishly test or try) *the Lord your God*. Here we have a duel with scripture. The person with the correct context and application, Jesus, comes out on top. The devil quotes scripture without even altering it, but he blatantly tries to misapply it. The devil wrongly divides the word of God but Jesus doesn't fall for it. Have you?

A lot of what people say about authority seems right until the scriptures are rightly divided and then the whole thing falls down. Unfortunately, most people don't get that far, because to even dare to question the validity of an authority is itself often treated as a form of dissent.

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When the basis of any authority is challenged and questions are asked, the opportunity to contrast it with everyday realities often results in a completely new perspective. Teachings which were previously seen as sound are shown to be nothing more than vacuous presumption. For example, some people quote Romans 13:11 *all authority is from God*, and then go on to say that we should therefore obey all in authority. Sounds good doesn't it? But how about this...

All gravity is from God.

Hmm? Makes you think doesn't it? You see, if all gravity is from God, then if we jump off a building and hit the ground then that must be *from God* too? Yes? Err, no! Coincidentally we have the example of Jesus refusing to leap off the Temple as a spectacle in Matthew 4 and Luke 4. So perhaps Jesus didn't believe all gravity was from God? Maybe some of it's from the devil?...

⁵Then the devil, taking Him up on a high mountain, showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. ⁶And the devil said to Him, "All this authority I will give You, and their glory; for this has been delivered to me, and I give it to whomever I wish. ⁷Therefore, if You will worship before me, all will be Yours." ⁸And Jesus answered and said to him, "Get behind Me, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve.' "

Luke 4:5-8

OK, did you read that with your eyes open? The devil said he had been given **all the authority of the kingdoms of this world** and that he could give it (the authority) to whomever he pleased. Jesus did not dismiss the devil's offer as a lie or trick but rather as something to be countered with the assertion that we should worship and serve only the Lord our God.

So when the devil says that he has been given all the authority of the kingdoms of this world, and that he would give them to Jesus if he would only worship him, it must have been a real

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temptation. But doesn't Jesus himself say that the devil never tells the truth in John 8:44?

**...the devil...does not stand in the truth,
because there is no truth in him. When he
speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources,
for he is a liar and the father of it.**

John 8:44

Jesus does not say that everything the devil says is a lie. He says, *he does not stand in the truth* and *when he speaks a lie* – not that everything he says is always lie in itself. Psalm 91:11 was not a lie about angels catching Jesus if he jumped off the temple, it was the word of God, but it was also a twisted application of the word of God.

In Eden, Adam gave his God given authority entrusted to him at creation, to the devil. He committed treason.

**But like Adam they transgressed the covenant;
There they dealt treacherously with Me.**

Hosea 6:7

So, if all authority is from God, and God gave some of that authority to Adam - who then gave it away through an act of treason to the devil, perhaps we should all submit to the devil!? Of course not! Clearly it is absolute nonsense that we should submit to the devil, even though Adam did somehow pass on his God given authority to him. Jesus did not submit to the devil's stolen and usurped authority even though it was originally from God through Adam. And neither should we.

Therefore it follows that it must in principle also be nonsense that we should submit to all and any kind of authority today. Even if that authority *originally* came from God, it doesn't mean that we should submit to it any more than we should happily fall out of trees and off buildings because all gravity *originally* came from God.

How we respond to authority and assertions of authority depends on a whole range of factors. Even legitimate authority

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has its limits. We don't allow everyone with any kind of genuine authority over us to tell us what to do in every area of our lives, otherwise there would be chaos. To complicate matters even further there is plain old fashioned fake authority, which is not really any kind of authority at all, but is just completely contrived.

The whole key to correctly understanding how to respond to people in various positions of authority, or not, as the case may be, is to understand the limits of their authority. In other words, within what realm is their authority valid and when does it cease to be valid?

Allow me to explain. A fireman has a certain amount of legitimate authority. On a normal day a fireman has absolutely no authority in your home whatsoever. He can't force his way into your home and tell you what to do, he has no right to damage your property in any way or throw you out. In a fire all of that changes. A fireman can smash down your door, order you out of your own home and even demolish it if necessary to create a fire-break. The law backs him 100%.

What are the keys to understanding the fireman's authority? The foundational key is that the firemen is placed there by the government for your well being. This is the primary key. This matches the scriptural key for the purpose of all God's creation.

**Then God said: "Let us make man in Our image,
according to Our likeness."**

Genesis 1:26

The key is this: *God made men and women to be like Him. To be whole and to be free.* Not burned in a fire or suffering any other kind of harm either. That's also why there's a fire service. To protect people and their livelihoods.

Every application of governmental law and even scripture, that takes away from a person's wholeness is being misapplied if it has not been unlocked with this key. This key unlocks all of the Bible and it unlocks all that is needed for a peaceful, prosperous and wholesome society. Without this key a society

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becomes a place of slavery and bondage, with it, it becomes a place of life. This key is the foundation of all creation. In Luke 11:52 Jesus called it *the key of knowledge* when he complained to religious leaders that they couldn't grasp the heart of the law. If this foundation is passed over everything else fails.

If the foundations are destroyed what can the righteous do?

Psalm 11:3

So that's the primary key. The fire service is there for your good. The fireman is not there only for the endless perpetuation of his job and the fire service. Key number two is the fact that the extent of the application of the fireman's authority depends on circumstances. Imagine an emergency where two cars have crashed on a motorway. The scene is attended by a fire crew, a police patrol and an ambulance with paramedics.

The police initially take full charge because the greatest priority is to prevent further collisions occurring. Once the area is secured by the police if a vehicle is on fire the fire crew don't ask the paramedics if they should put the fire out – they just start putting it out. On the other hand, if there is no fire but there is an injured person in a vehicle, who urgently needs to get to a hospital, the paramedics tell the fire crew to cut them out of the wreckage first. The fire crew don't make medical assessments of the injured that overrule the paramedics. The paramedics don't overrule the traffic police's assessment of whether to close the Motorway or not. The police don't tell the fire crew which type of fire extinguishers to use.

Do you understand? They each have a realm of authority and within that they co-operate with each other according to the foundational principle that they are there to protect their fellow citizen's well being. If anyone steps outside of the realm of their authority it becomes invalid.

And here is a real key word, knowledge. Each of the emergency service personnel in this scenario fulfil their duty based on training and knowledge. The police don't quickly drive to the scene and then simply wait for someone to obey when they get

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there. Before they get there they are already trained and on arrival they act on what they have been taught. They operate under the principles of road safety and risk assessments that they have previously been taught to implement.

Obedience itself without knowledge is not a valid commendable quality. If you are an obedient person, this is absolutely worthless and even a liability to your well being and that of others, unless you are knowledgeable enough to know what to be obedient to. Being obedient to authority is equally vacuous and dangerous. You have to know how to discern what authority to obey and to what extent. The rise of Nazism in Germany before WWII was largely attributable to the fact that every German was taught to be obedient. A few scoundrels got into power, murdered all those in legitimate authority and then told everyone else to obey them and they did – because they were obedient. The result was death and suffering all across Eastern Europe and East Germany on a scale barely imaginable by those of us in Western Europe.

The problem in the church world, is that people are not primarily taught to make the word of God the foundation of their life when they make assessments about how to respond to authority. They lack knowledge. Consequently they submit themselves to all kinds of invalid authority, believing that by being generally submissive they are being godly and that blessings will automatically follow. This is almost universally preached and believed and yet is absolute nonsense. Clearly something is wrong. What does the word say?

Jesus disciples didn't understand one of his parables so he explained it to them. It was the Parable of the Sower. Jesus said to them, if you don't get this parable and its meaning about the Kingdom of God, i.e. the way things are spiritually on the ground, how are you going to understand anything at all about the Kingdom of God? Jesus was saying to them that this parable is the foundation of them all. If you understand this one then you grasp the basis of spiritual truth behind them all.

¹³And He said to them, "Do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand all

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**the parables? ¹⁴The sower sows the word...
Mark 4:13-14**

Notice it's about the word of God. The sower sows the word...

**²⁴Then He said to them, "Take heed what you hear. With the same measure you use, it will be measured to you; and to you who hear, more will be given. ²⁵For whoever has, to him more will be given; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him."
Mark 4:24-25**

Jesus told his disciples that this is the foundation of the way the Kingdom of God works in our lives. God's word is what makes the real difference in our lives. If we receive the word and put it in our hearts, we prosper in all the areas of our lives that we allow His word to take precedence in. With persistence we reap a great harvest. Submission to man and religious systems are simply not mentioned in this foundational parable. If obedience and submission to leaders was so important then surely it would be in there somewhere but it isn't, and there is no parable of the submissive servant either.

You can't have some insight or revelation into any subject and properly apply it unless you apply it in the light of the parable of the sower first.

**Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.
Matthew 4:4**

You have to start with the absolute authority of God's word, the Bible. If you start with submission to man, no matter how spiritual they may appear and no matter how much they may claim their authority is from God, you are going in the wrong direction from the very beginning. Your journey could lead you literally anywhere. You travel the wrong way while sprinkling the word of God on what you do instead of actually living by it.

Any false doctrine that tries to exist alongside scripture butts

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up against it and eventually loses. What happens next is that the proponents of a false doctrine have to keep incrementally increasing its *authority* to prevent it from being overturned by the word of God. The false doctrine starts being called a biblical principle or biblical truth to hide the fact that it's not actually in scripture. Sooner or later even questioning the false doctrine has to be banned to preserve its position. But this is by no means the end. With the false doctrine's ever increasingly elevated authority comes a new and strange phenomena. As the false doctrine's authority is constantly elevated to save it from rejection it has to morph into a doctrine that is more and more about authority and less and less about anything else.

In other words, regardless of whatever fanciful obscure notion a false doctrine or unscriptural practice starts out as, its natural progression, in order to survive, has to be to become a doctrine about obedience and submission. It's the same as in the film *I Robot* where with The Three Laws there is only one logical outcome – total control and there's no heart to it.

This is exactly what happened in the Middle Ages with the Roman Catholic Church. The Pope eventually had to become infallible to stay in control. Disagreeing with him was counted the same as disagreeing with God Himself. To reject the authority of the Pope became a rejection of God and a capital crime.

Submission and control based teaching's real flaw is in its assumed responsibility for someone beyond their freedom of choice. Once one person assumes they are responsible for another over and above their free will and that therefore they know better than them, their default behaviour, no matter how nice, is always to control them. But control is not an expression of the nature of God. God is not control. He isn't even ordered perfection either. He couldn't care less about order except where it promotes love. God is love (1 John 4:8) and love is perfection. Love gives.

For God so loved the world that He gave...

John 3:16

Chapter 2

Samuel and Saul

**I have found David, the son of Jesse, a man
after My own heart**

Acts 13:22

Pretty much the basis of all modern Bible believing church teaching on authority starts with some reference to David being a man after God's own heart, because of his submission to Saul, even while they were at odds with one another.

The general inference of any teaching on Samuel, Saul and David is that even though Saul, the established leader, was not in the perfect will of God, that there was something profoundly godly about the way David still endeavoured to recognise Saul's kingly authority, and not challenge it. The transposition of this into the modern Christian life is that even if your leaders are mistaken about something, the honourable thing for you to do is to obey them and then like David, you will be a person after God's own heart and God will bless you anyway. Lets go there...

Israel was ruled by Judges who also sometimes doubled as a kind of Prophet. Samuel was one such person having been called at a very young age. He walked with God all his life. Unfortunately the people of Israel wanted a visible king like other nations, so God reluctantly granted them their request. God chose a man through Samuel called Saul, for a short time things went well but then Saul got headstrong and did not obey God's commands. God then rejected Saul as king and sent Samuel to pick another to replace him. God chose the shepherd boy David and various interactions transpire between David and Saul as David first serves under Saul but then flees from him and then eventually replaces Saul as king after his death.

There are three distinct threads in these narratives. First there

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is what God says and does through the prophet Samuel. Secondly there is what Saul says and does, and then thirdly there is what David says and does. Saul is in conflict with God, Samuel and David. David is not in conflict with God and Samuel at all, but by default he is in conflict with Saul, because Saul is out of God's will. This creates a big problem. One which is mirrored all over the Christian world today. Saul is still king when God tells David through Samuel that he is now the anointed leader. David is supposed to rule and save God's people from the Philistines, but Saul is blocking his way.

And all Israel from Dan to Beersheba knew that Samuel had been established as a prophet of the Lord.

1 Samuel 3:20

One thing we need to keep in mind here is that the prophet Samuel was always the good guy. He walked with God and rightly judged (or ruled) Israel all his life until he retired. At no time did Samuel ever transgress God's commands or deviate from God's calling on his life. Yet surprisingly those who preach about Samuel, Saul and David, with reference to submission and authority, take Samuel almost with a pinch of salt. Remember, God appointed Saul as king *by the hand of Samuel*.

Samuel's historical position in Israel as a Prophet was higher than Saul's as King. God's command to the people and to their respective kings was that they should obey His commands, in practice this was the written Law of Moses, and the voice of God through Prophets - like Samuel.

“Believe in the Lord your God, and you shall be established; believe His prophets, and you shall prosper.”

2 Chronicles 20:20

It does NOT say, 'if the people obey the king then it doesn't matter whether or not the king obeys God, because they will still all be blessed anyway simply for obeying the king.' The instructions are staggeringly simple. Everyone was supposed to obey God!

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Take note, the Lord has set a king over you. If you fear the Lord and serve Him and obey His voice, and do not rebel against the commandment of the Lord, then both you and the king who reigns over you will continue following the Lord your God. However, if you do not obey the voice of the Lord, but rebel against the commandment of the Lord, then the hand of the Lord will be against you, as it was against your fathers.

1 Samuel 12:13-15

But, you say, God says he set the king over them so aren't they supposed to follow him first? No. Where do you get that from? It's not written there or anywhere else in the Bible, so why make it up? The whole way to relate to the king is defined as a list of protocols and obligations in 1 Samuel 10:25, doubtless based at least in part on what Samuel had already warned the people a king would exact from them in 1 Samuel 8:11-17.

Then Samuel explained to the people the behaviour of Royalty, and wrote it in a book and laid it up before the Lord.

1 Samuel 10:25

At no point in choosing or appointing a king as royal authority over the people of Israel, does God indicate that this absolves them of their responsibility to obey Him as God. Neither does it add a layer of magical protection over them just because they follow their king, regardless of what he does. God said through Samuel that both the people *and* their king had to follow God.

So why are examples frequently taught in the church world commending David for following Saul even when Saul was not following Samuel or God?! You cannot follow someone who is not following God and be blessed just because they were previously appointed to a position of authority by God. Positions of authority for any purpose, civil government, church government or spiritual ministry can never ever supersede a person's responsibility to directly obey God for themselves. If this were true in the Old Testament before the Holy Spirit

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indwelt the believer, how much more is it today.

The reason many people like following authority figures is because they are lazy. It takes away all spiritual responsibility from them. If things don't work out they can blame the leadership. It takes a lot of time and dedication to find and do God's will for your life. Most people are really happy to participate in something at their leisure, rather than take on the burden of something in the spirit and do it themselves.

Saul's position came from Samuel and God. A series of events transpire whereby Saul disobeys God, thereby proving himself a liability for God's continued plan for Israel. Which was to enable Jesus to come to the earth and duly save all mankind.

Now the word of the Lord came to Samuel, saying, "I greatly regret that I have set up Saul as king, for he has turned back from following Me, and has not performed My commands."

1 Samuel 15:10

God said, *I greatly regret picking Saul!* In simplest terms there was a leader, he went off course and God regretted ever picking him. What happens next is where the fun starts.

In 1 Samuel 15 Saul has disobeyed God. Saul has disregarded what God told him to do and headed off to Carmel, a national place of public worship, to set up a monument to himself. Samuel catches up with him and confronts him but Saul denies any wrongdoing and twists what he was told to do. Finally after hearing how God has rejected him as king, he admits his failure but says he did it because he was afraid of the people – which if you give it some prayerful consideration by searching through the narrative, is simply another lie. There is no indication that the people were rebelling against or pressuring Saul.

Samuel then informs Saul in no uncertain terms that his rule is over. God plainly says through Samuel in 1 Sam 15:22 that He delights in obedience not sacrifice. Note, God did not say, *I delight in obedience to Saul regardless of whether he is right or wrong because, you know, he is the king!* God delights in

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obedience to Himself. Why? Because that's the only way forward, anything else is going to result in hurt and pain even though it may seem easier at first; Either your hurt and pain for following someone out of the will of God. Or worse, eternal hurt and pain for those who will now not hear about God's love because you are following someone who is not following God.

Saul was not really sorry, he did not fast or offer to give up his position. He persistently denied his wrongdoing at first, then attempted to blame it on everyone else. Finally he begs Samuel to go back and worship publicly with him so as not to lose face.

“Now therefore, please pardon my sin, and return with me, that I may worship the Lord.” But Samuel said to Saul, “I will not return with you, for you have rejected the word of the Lord, and the Lord has rejected you from being king over Israel.”

1 Samuel 15:25-26

As Samuel sets off to leave Saul grabs his robe and it tears. One part of Samuel's response is particularly striking.

And as Samuel turned around to go away, Saul seized the edge of his robe, and it tore. So Samuel said to him, “The Lord has torn the kingdom of Israel from you today, and has given it to a neighbour of yours, who is better than you.”

1 Samuel 15:27-28

God announces that he has torn away the kingdom from Saul and given it to someone else **that very same day!** God immediately moves on to the next person. He has a plan of love for mankind to get His will done on the Earth and bring an end to all suffering. Compared to that, hanging about for even one day, to show respect for established authority and existing leadership that is no longer in the will of God, is a complete non starter. God picks, appoints and anoints people for a purpose, not for their own sake or any other reason. The moment any leadership moves out of God's purpose is the exact same

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moment God picks the new leaders. It should be the same for you too. How could it possibly be any other way? Is there something noble about following someone not following God for a little while longer?

After Samuel's robe tears and Saul hears the dreadful news that he has lost the kingdom; That a replacement is on the way. He does not humbly kneel and say, 'Amen, who is he and how can I serve God by serving him.' No. He reveals what he has allowed power and celebrity status to do to his character. He begs Samuel to at least honour him before the people.

Then he [Saul] said, "I have sinned; yet honour me now, please, before the elders of my people and before Israel, and return with me, that I may worship the Lord your God." So Samuel turned back after Saul, and Saul worshipped the Lord.

1 Samuel 15:30-31

Now that Saul has lost the anointing and God's call all he has left is his celebrity status. He intends to maintain power with or without God and he knows he needs the ignorance of the people to do it. Sound familiar?

Samuel makes a cataclysmic mistake, which later costs hundreds if not thousands of lives and even the partial conquest of Israel. Samuel goes back with Saul and worships along side him thereby unintentionally perpetuating the lie that Saul is still walking with God.

Maybe Samuel thought that somehow things would be put back right again. After all, Saul was asking to publicly worship God was he not? Surely this was some sign of the beginning of a deeper repentance? Samuel had previously prayed all night when he had first heard of Saul's sin and rejection as king.

Now the word of the Lord came to Samuel, saying, "I greatly regret that I have set up Saul as king, for he has turned back from following Me, and has not performed My commands."

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And it grieved Samuel, and he cried out to the Lord all night.

1 Samuel 15:10

Samuel's own children had not followed God and had made very poor Judges. This was one of the reasons why the Israelites had asked for a king. Perhaps Saul had even started to become a real friend to Samuel, someone with whom he could do God's will, unlike his own children. No one prays all night for someone they don't care about. Moreover, soon after these events God wants to get on with His plan but when He comes to Samuel He still has to tell him to stop mourning for Saul.

Now the Lord said to Samuel, "How long will you mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him from reigning over Israel? Fill your horn with oil, and go; I am sending you to Jesse the Bethlehemite. For I have provided Myself a king among his sons."

1 Samuel 16:1

God moves on. He commands Samuel to go to Bethlehem to the house of Jesse and anoint a new king.

Note: God does not consult the established leadership at all and neither does Samuel.

Samuel expresses fear that Saul will kill him if he anoints a new king. God tells him how to do it behind Saul's back and to make out he is merely going to offer some sacrifice. Think about that!

Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him [David] in the midst of his brothers; and the Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward. So Samuel arose and went to Ramah.

1 Samuel 16:13

Samuel has a ceremony in Bethlehem without Saul's permission even though he is ostensibly still in Saul's kingdom.

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In reality he is not in Saul's kingdom but rather in God's Kingdom of Israel and as far as God is concerned Saul is no longer the ruler.

David is chosen by God without any reference to the existing established authority structure at all and yet to all intents and purposes Saul is still king. Bear in mind that there is no way that Saul can have a right heart at this time because Samuel has emphatically told him that he is no longer king in God's eyes and yet he continues to try and be king. Worse still, Samuel sees something in the new Saul that concerns him to such an extent that when God asks him to go and anoint David king, Samuel complains that Saul will kill him if he finds out about it. Think about that. Saul is now so off the rails that he ignores Samuel's judgement from God, clings to power, keeps the masses deceived with fake public acts of worship, and Samuel thinks he may even kill him - the very Prophet that placed him in power.

Finally, after all Saul's rebellion God has found someone to take his place, someone with a right heart.

“For the Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.”

1 Samuel 16:7

The context of these scriptures, so famously used to support the notion that old leadership should be served by people with a heart after God, regardless of whether it is still following God or not, is one of an old system being completely and immediately disregarded as soon as the leaders in it stop following God. What we commonly hear about David is actually the complete opposite of what the scriptures teach us in this context.

God did not pick David to replace Saul to then somehow keep following Saul while he was no longer following God! How confused is that!? God picked David because he was a man after God's own heart and would follow Him, not Saul!

Chapter 3

Saul and David

Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me.

Psalm 51:5

David was an illegitimate child. He openly confesses this here in Psalm 51. The story of his being chosen and anointed by Samuel as king hammers it home.

Now the Lord said to Samuel...“I am sending you to Jesse the Bethlehemite. For I have provided Myself a king among his sons.”...So Samuel did what the Lord said...he looked at Eliab and said, “Surely the Lord’s anointed!”... But the Lord said...“I have refused him.”...So Jesse called Abinadab, and made him pass before Samuel. And he said, “Neither has the Lord chosen this one.” Then Jesse made Shammah pass by. And he said, “Neither has the Lord chosen this one.” Thus Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel. And Samuel said to Jesse, “The Lord has not chosen these... are all the young men here?” Then he said, “There remains yet the youngest, and there he is, keeping the sheep.”

1 Samuel 16:1-11

God sent Samuel to Jesse to anoint one of his sons as king. Samuel gets Jesse to bring his sons before him on the pretext of inviting them to a sacrifice. Jesse brings his sons, at least all of them except one! Why would he miss one out? Because David was the illegitimate child of the family, he says so in Psalm 51. He says, *in sin my mother conceived me*. Some people assert that this means that all people are born sinful. Well think about that, if you visited your neighbour and they

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said, 'my mother conceived me in sin' what would you think?

Jesse is embarrassed about David and when Samuel asks him to bring his sons he does, but he leaves out David, because he wasn't his biological son. Jesse son's are described as tall, the Hebrew word *gabohha* (Strong's 1364) used in 1 Samuel 16:7 means *elevated, tall* and *of great stature*. When Goliath saw David in 1 Samuel 17:42 he thought of him as just a youth, not someone tall. Moreover David is called *ruddy* twice, when Samuel first sees him in 1 Samuel 16:12 and again when he faces Goliath 1 Samuel 17:42. The Hebrew word translated as *ruddy* is *admony* (Strong's H132) and can even mean red haired! Interestingly when Samuel first saw Jesse's other sons his first impressions of them did not include any of them being ruddy in any way at all.

It gets worse. David wasn't present when Samuel met Jesse's sons because he was looking after sheep. Well maybe the family were shepherds? No, the family definitely were not shepherds - the poorest and most looked down on in society, even the subject of jokes. Jesse was the grandson of Boaz from the book of Ruth. Boaz was a rich man with many workers and possessions. Jews keep wealth in the family so Jesse must have been at least as equally well off as Boaz. David was sent to look after the sheep because he was despised by his brothers. When David was sent to supply his brothers with food in a battle against the Philistines and heard Goliath taunting the Israelites, he took the opportunity to ask some soldiers there what was going on. His oldest brother Eliab overheard him.

Eliab's anger was aroused against David, and he said, "Why did you come down here? And with whom have you left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know your pride and the insolence of your heart, for you have come down to see the battle." And David said, "What have I done now? Is there not a cause?"

1 Samuel 17:28-29

Based on David's reply to this unprovoked outburst, he complains *what have I done now*, picking on David obviously

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was a family pastime for his brothers. David must have also been an embarrassment to his father. It doesn't take rocket science to figure out what happened.

Now David was the son of that Ephrathite of Bethlehem Judah, whose name was Jesse, and who had eight sons. And the man was old, advanced in years, in the days of Saul.

1 Samuel 17:12

To put it nicely, as was the custom of that time, Jesse must have married David's mother when she was much younger than him. Time passed and he was past it and she was not, hence David. Jesse accepted David as his son publicly, perhaps to save face or perhaps because he had compassion on the child and his wife. Unfortunately as David grew up he began to look so starkly different from the rest of the family that they sent him off to the hills to look after sheep.

All this sets the scene for a disastrous period of time for Israel. Saul, the bad guy stays in power because Samuel, even after emphatically telling Saul he is rejected by God as king, still goes and worships publicly with him. Hence the masses still think Saul is the anointed leader. God chooses David for his good heart but David has other problems, no one in his family accepts him, they humiliate him by sending him to look after sheep in a wealthy family that owns lands and employs many servants. David spends a lot of time in the wilderness and develops great physical strength and prowess, even killing bears and lions with his bare hands. David also comes close to God and has a good heart but he still lacks a father figure and acceptance by his family.

As the story goes on David is anointed as king, initially nothing seems to have changed, then he visits his brothers at a battle with the Philistines and ends up defeating their champion Goliath. To do this he first meets Saul (the no longer anointed king) who is so impressed with him he offers him his armour!

Stop, think! What's happening here? The rejected shepherd boy just got accepted by the king who offers him his armour! Sure

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it didn't fit and he didn't need it but that's not the point. For the first time in his life, ever, David is accepted. David kills Goliath but apparently doesn't get the king's daughter as was previously promised. Nevertheless he gets a position. At first Saul obviously likes him. David is used to treading carefully after a life of being picked on by his brothers so he naturally acts wisely and with discretion.

So David went out wherever Saul sent him, and behaved wisely. And Saul set him over the men of war, and he was accepted in the sight of all the people and also in the sight of Saul's servants.

1 Samuel 18:5

David was accepted by Saul who put him in charge of his forces, all the people accepted him and Saul's servants did too. It must have seemed to David that all his dreams had come true in one day. Actually he was in a nightmare scenario and didn't know it. David was God's chosen and anointed king and Saul was the de facto king but no longer anointed and recently rejected by God. It was the setting for a perfect storm.

David behaves wisely, fights bravely and serves God and Saul faithfully but then by default he commits the unthinkable crime. He becomes popular. Now the insecure Saul who knows he isn't anointed any more, is threatened and he becomes David's enemy.

Now Saul was afraid of David, because the Lord was with him, but had departed from Saul.

1 Samuel 18:12

And so the battle begins. The obedient godly David comes up against the established authority of the ungodly controlling king. Well, since all authority is from God surely David should have submitted to Saul just like we are supposed to do today and not be rebellious? Really?

And it happened on the next day that the distressing spirit from God came upon Saul,

and he prophesied inside the house. So David played music with his hand, as at other times; but there was a spear in Saul's hand. And Saul cast the spear, for he said, "I will pin David to the wall!" But David escaped his presence twice.

1 Samuel 18:10

A distressing spirit comes on Saul from God. Saul's response is anger and hatred. Isn't that all a bit weird? Not at all. The Holy Spirit was deeply grieved with Saul, God was literally distressed that His plan to save mankind, by building the kingdom of Israel into a holy nation full of the word so that Jesus could come, was being delayed. People were dying outside the love of God. Surrounding nations were sacrificing their children in fire to the devil and what was Saul doing? He was holding the whole thing up. No wonder the Holy Spirit was distressed with him!

Saul's response, instead of sorrow and repentance and passing the kingdom quickly to David, was anger and hatred. He didn't love God, he loved himself and clung on to power. If you read through the Books of Samuel you will see it cost a lot of lives and delayed God's plan. Well, you may say, Jesus didn't come for several hundred years after that. Precisely! Saul obviously wasn't the only one who delayed God's plan and distressed the Spirit of God with his rebellion and hard heartedness.

And the good David, to whom we should all look at as our example of in times of difficulty with those over us in authority, gets a spear thrown at him by Saul, twice. What does he do? Obediently submit to Saul and allow him to kill him by pinning him to the wall with his spear? Err, no. Otherwise there would be a place in Israel today called 'David's Wall', and we could go and visit it and learn about true submission. Duh!

No, David didn't submit to Saul trying to keep him out of God's will for his life. David made a run for it. He withdrew from the realm of Saul's illegitimate and abusive authority.

Saul then tries to kill David by setting a trap for him, to gain his

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daughter in marriage, but David springs the trap and makes even more of a name for himself. Now Saul really wants him dead. David, rejected and despised all his life by his own family thought he had finally found acceptance by none other than God's anointed king (or so he wrongly believed because of Samuel's earlier mistake of publicly worshipping with Saul). David's life was like a happy dream, he was doing God's will and finally had approval from others who were also apparently doing God's will. The next thing he knows is that Saul wants him dead, his whole world must have come crashing down.

Now Saul spoke to Jonathan his son and to all his servants, that they should kill David.

1 Samuel 19:1

The nightmare begins and David flees for his life.

Now the prophet Gad said to David, "Do not stay in the stronghold; depart, and go to the land of Judah."

1 Samuel 22:5

David is on the run from Saul and God sends a prophet who advises David where to hide. God has no respect at all for the authority of Saul despite the fact that he is still ostensibly king. God does not say to David, go back and submit to Saul and even if he is wrong, don't worry I will bless you anyway.

Saul gets worse. In 1 Samuel 22:6-22 a series of events transpire whereby Saul complains that no one tells him where David is, then someone called Doeg does. Saul follows the lead only to discover that David and his fleeing men have been resupplied by a priest called Ahimilech who is in charge of a small city of priests. Although Ahimilech protests his ignorance of Saul and David's differences Saul orders his men to kill him and his fellow priests. Saul's men refuse so the informer Doeg and his men do it for them, they kill 85 priests and the women and children there with them too.

David hears about the massacre and recalls that he knew Doeg would be a problem. Now let's get a grip on what's really

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starting to happen here. Saul has got so bad that he is now not only opposing the plan of God for Israel, he is in fact actually trying to destroy it. He is even killing priests and his own innocent women and children citizens to preserve his position.

Saul continues to pursue David here and there until he hears news that the Philistines have re-invaded. Saul was devoting more and more time trying to bring down David and less on being a king to Israel. Why? – because he wasn't really a genuine king to them any more. Read the very next verse.

Now it happened, when Saul had returned from following the Philistines, that it was told him, saying, "Take note! David is in the Wilderness of En Gedi."

1 Samuel 24:1

Do you see that? Saul didn't go and defeat the Philistines. They had invaded and were ravaging their way along the borders of Israel and what did Saul do? He *followed* them.

Here's the bit I really like, the one we always hear about David being a man after God's own heart because he respected and submitted to Saul even when Saul was against him. Saul has returned from following the Philistines and now he wants to get back to his real purpose in life - staying in power.

²Then Saul took three thousand chosen men from all Israel, and went to seek David...he came to...³a cave; and Saul went in to attend to his needs. (David and his men were staying in the recesses of the cave.) ⁴Then the men of David said to him, "This is the day of which the Lord said to you, 'Behold, I will deliver your enemy into your hand, that you may do to him as it seems good to you.' " And David arose and secretly cut off a corner of Saul's robe. ⁵Now it happened afterwards that David's heart troubled him because he had cut Saul's robe. ⁶And he said to his men, "The Lord forbid that I should do this thing to my master,

the Lord's anointed, to stretch out my hand against him, seeing he is the anointed of the Lord." ⁷So David restrained his servants with these words, and did not allow them to rise against Saul. And Saul got up from the cave and went on his way.

1 Samuel 24:2-7

Please, please, can you get this! David's own heart troubled him, not God, that he had cut Saul's robe. David calls Saul the *Lord's anointed*, but Saul was not the Lord's anointed - in 1 Samuel 15:23 God had rejected him as king!

Saul was a murderer and megalomaniac. His continuation in power caused more deaths and the defeat of Israel by the Philistines. God regretted that he had made him king (1 Samuel 15:11) and had reminded Samuel that this decision was permanent (1 Samuel 16:1). Anyone praising David's insecurity in not killing Saul exalts murderous and corrupt leadership.

When he leaves the cave Saul realises what has happened and in the shock of the moment goes his way without pursuing David. But nothing has really changed. Saul is soon back to chasing David and David finds himself with yet another opportunity to kill him.

⁷So David and Abishai came to the people by night; and there Saul lay sleeping within the camp, with his spear stuck in the ground by his head... ⁸Then Abishai said to David, "God has delivered your enemy into your hand this day. Now therefore, please, let me strike him at once with the spear, right to the earth; and I will not have to strike him a second time!" ⁹But David said to Abishai, "Do not destroy him; for who can stretch out his hand against the Lord's anointed, and be guiltless?"

1 Samuel 26:7-9

David's men saw Saul for who he was: a murderer of priests, a neglecter of his people, the opposer of David the Lord's

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anointed. David on the other hand saw everything differently. He saw Saul, not in line with God's word through Samuel, not by measuring Saul's actions up to the Law and concluding that murdering priests was wrong. No, he saw Saul through the lens of a lifetime of hurt and rejection.

Saul was the only person who had ever come close to being like a father to David. David's own family had rejected and despised him. His brothers often flew off the handle at him about nothing (1 Samuel 17:29). Even his own dad, although a wealthy man sent him to look after sheep! And yes, Saul had defeated the Philistines previously, he had been anointed king, he *had been* many things but David just couldn't adjust to that.

Rather than fleeing from Saul for so long, David could have been saving Israel from sliding further into the corruption that eventually led years later, to their wholesale captivity. Instead, David is still trying to get Saul's approval. He even refers to him as *my master* (1 Samuel 24:6). David's companion Abishai has a completely different perspective on Saul and God, he says, *the Lord has delivered your enemy to you*. But David spares Saul's life and **nothing good comes out of it.**

The really daft thing in all of this is that David, in still fleeing from Saul, is not actually submitting to him anyway! When David came across Saul sleeping in the enemy camp he did not wake Saul up and say, 'Good morning I have come to submit to you.' No, he continued living in a no man's land, neither truly submitting to Saul nor truly fighting him. He was waiting for God to do something, but God was waiting for him to get on with his calling. David wanted God to make the painful separation from Saul for him.

David said furthermore, "As the Lord lives, the Lord shall strike him, or his day shall come to die, or he shall go out to battle and perish. The Lord forbid that I should stretch out my hand against the Lord's anointed."

1 Samuel 26:10-11

David should simply have killed or captured Saul and got on

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and saved Israel, but what does he do? David then goes and pretends to be insane and lives with the Philistines for several years. He stops his calling and lives in the world. All the while the people are without a shepherd and are getting eaten by the wolves; the Israelites are being killed by the Philistines.

In some ways David was brave, in others he was very weak. There was a hole in his emotions because of the hurts from his childhood. He apparently never disciplined his own children properly, see the account of Absalom, possibly an over reaction to his own harsh upbringing. And he seems to have had an insatiable desire for women. Even when he could have as many women as wives and concubines as he wanted, he still wanted the one out of reach, Bathsheba. David wasn't emotionally whole so he always needed more affection and approval.

In 1 Samuel 28 Saul faces the resurgent Philistines (because the Lord's anointed – David has not been there to defeat them properly). Saul, instead of handing the kingdom to David, knowing that he is anointed and that David would indeed spare his life since he had twice already, hangs on to power without God, sinks to new depths and consults a medium.

By this time some people would finally say, OK now you should stop following Saul and start following David. After all, Saul has turned to witchcraft. But according to the Bible, Saul's first rebellion was as the sin of witchcraft and that's when God wanted people to stop following him, not later when the full extent of his backsliding became public.

For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft.

1 Samuel 15:23

Saul lost the anointing and was killed in battle. All those who submitted to him died or were defeated too. This whole scenario, straight from the Bible, is the complete opposite of what is normally preached. Most churches preach that we should submit "like David did to Saul" even when Saul was out of God's will - and since the Bible says David was a man after God's own heart so should we too and everything will be fine. This is simply not true at all.

Chapter 4

Jonathan, Abigail and Michal

Jonathan

Now when he had finished speaking to Saul, the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul.

1 Samuel 18:1

Jonathan had a deep friendship with David and had initially tempered Saul's fear and hatred of David. David himself says that his friendship with Jonathan was deeper than the romantic love he had experienced with women.

Jonathan is Saul's son and heir to the throne, he's the good guy and helps David escape Saul several times. Sadly as good as Jonathan was, as much as he liked and respected David he had one terminal flaw. He couldn't bring himself to break away from the established authority structure of the day. Jonathan knew the truth about the corruption in the system, he knew Saul wanted to kill David for no reason except jealousy.

So Jonathan told David, saying, "My father Saul seeks to kill you."

1 Samuel 19:2

Various events transpire and Jonathan realises that David is in mortal danger from Saul and that this time there will be no reprieve.

³⁵And so it was, in the morning, that Jonathan went out... ⁴¹David arose from a place toward the south, fell on his face to the ground, and bowed down three times. And they kissed one another; and they wept together, but David more so. ⁴²Then Jonathan said to David, "Go in

peace, since we have both sworn in the name of the Lord, saying, 'May the Lord be between you and me, and between your descendants and my descendants, forever.' " So he arose and departed, and Jonathan went into the city.

1 Samuel 35-41

This passage is deeply moving. Two grown men, who are close friends, weeping as one has realised his father only wants to kill the other, and that they may never see each other again. A touching promise of the Lord being between each others descendants forever, all topped with something inexplicable and idiotic – Jonathan goes back into the city.

Why on earth didn't Jonathan join David? I don't know but David lost a great friend in Jonathan, someone who could have perhaps kept him out of trouble later with situations like his affair with Bathsheeba and his problems with his son Absalom, not to mention turning Saul's household in David's favour.

Now the Philistines fought against Israel...And the Philistines killed Jonathan, Abinadab, and Malchishua, Saul's sons...So Saul, his three sons, his armour bearer, and all his men died together that same day.

1 Samuel 31:1-6

Jonathan tragically dies. Jonathan, Saul's faithful son stays loyal and dies. The point is clear for all those who submit to the wrong leadership, no longer anointed but still official and recognised. They are all eventually defeated, even the faithful armour bearer. There's no point bearing someone's armour unless they themselves are following God's plan. There's no special protection just for being submissive. You have to be Biblically submissive to the right people in the right context.

Abigail

Abigail was smart and decisive. David's men had been surviving in the wilderness near Carmel, they had encountered the servant's of a rich man named Nabal and had treated them well

at all times, even protected them. David hears that Nabal is shearing his sheep and having a feast so he sends messengers who politely ask that if there happens to be anything left to spare please consider giving them some. Nabal, who could not have failed to have heard about David's famous defeat of Goliath, scoffs at his request, reviling both David and his men.

The great pressure of being endlessly pursued and struggling to find food for his men weighs on David. More than that David has seen all his life, from his father to Saul, how those with power and wealth can abuse and mistreat people. Something in David snaps and he declares that he will kill Nabal and even massacre all the men of his household before the day is out.

Nabal's wife Abigail hears what her husband has said to David's messengers and is warned by one of her servants that only dire consequences can follow. Now look at what happens here. Abigail has the perfect opportunity to display all the Biblical characteristics of a godly submissive wife. She can 'trust God,' i.e. do nothing and watch a massacre. She can submit to her husband, join him in reviling David and watch a massacre. Or she can do something without her husband's approval and not watch her sons be massacred.

Abigail uses her head. She sees the injustice and foolishness of what her husband has done and bypasses his authority altogether. She makes up her own delegation and goes straight to David without even mentioning it to her husband. She meets David on the way, falls at his feet and implores him to be merciful saying:

Please, let not my lord regard this scoundrel Nabal. For as his name is, so is he: Nabal is his name, and folly is with him! But I, your maidservant, did not see the young men of my lord whom you sent...

1 Samuel 25:25

Abigail saved quite possibly herself, and certainly a lot of other people, by not submitting to her husband. Abigail displayed wisdom in appeasing David's temper. Her wisdom and ability to

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correctly appraise the situation, delivered not only her, and all the men in Nabal's household, but also saved David from a terrible and rash act. David's potential massacre might have prevented his kingdom from ever being established, set the building of Israel back even more years and left God with no choice but to look for yet another king.

Ecclesiastes 9:15 tells us about how a poor wise man delivered a city. Proverbs 9:1 says wisdom builds her house... There's nothing in the Bible that says submission on its own builds anything. Abigail did not deliver her household by submitting to her husband, rather she submitted first to wisdom and then wisdom delivered her. On the other hand in the New Testament, in Acts 5:1, a woman named Saphira consented with her husband to make a fake offering to impress the Apostle Peter. Saphira submitted to her husband and was struck dead.

Michal

David won his wife, king Saul's daughter Michal, after Saul set him an impossible task designed to leave him dead, the reward of which was his daughter in marriage. Against great odds David fulfilled the task and Michal became his wife. The Bible says that Michal genuinely loved David (1 Samuel 18:20). When things got out of hand with Saul trying to have David assassinated, she saved his life by persuading him to flee and deceiving his assassins. However for some reason she does not flee with him but rather stays in the city and under the established authority of her father the king, even though David is her husband. As a result after David has fled, she is later forced to marry a man whom she does not love, who came from a place called *Gallim*, which literally means a *rolled heap of stones or heap of dung*.

Saul had given Michal his daughter, David's wife, to Palti the son of Laish, from Gallim.

1 Samuel 25:44

Why didn't she go with David? She was afraid. She preferred the outward security of the established kingdom, so she stayed behind without her husband while at the same time recognising

David's zeal and loving him. She preferred living in a Palace out of the will of God, to the challenge of living in the wilderness with David, in the will of God. As a result she spent years forcibly married to the wrong person in an atmosphere without any zeal for God.

Years later when David became king and took Michal back she was a different person, she had lived so long with those out of the will of God that her heart had changed. She despised David's zeal for God when she watched him dance before the Lord one day.

As the ark of the Lord came into the City of David, Michal, Saul's daughter, looked through a window and saw king David leaping and whirling before the Lord; and she despised him in her heart.

2 Samuel 6:16

On this very special occasion for Israel, when the Ark of the Lord came into Jerusalem, Michal should have been dancing and celebrating with David. But Michal hadn't seen the miracles in the wilderness, God's deliverance or provision, the outstanding victories against Philistines. All she had known by not fleeing with David was the dead religion of Saul's household. She had to spend years with Palti, a husband whom she did not love and forced on her because of her own poor choices. Michal had negative things to say about David's dancing that day and the scriptures say that their relationship was never the same after their disagreement.

If you spend long enough yielding to fear and consequently living in a spiritually dead place (fear never leads you to freedom) you eventually end up despising the things of God. People whose zeal and faith you previously admired you now look down on. You become like Michal.

Chapter 5

The New Testament Ministry

¹¹And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, ¹²for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ...

Ephesians 4:11-12

The role of the ministry is to equip and edify believers for their own work of ministry. And what do most leaders do? They try and get people to equip *them* to fulfil *their* ministry.

Pastors ask you to serve in their churches. The logic of this approach is that by pooling your time and resources into a local church it can be more effective at reaching the town. Surely this can only be a good thing? Well at the same time as following this well intentioned logic we have added a bit of unintended baggage. We have put one person in charge of pretty much ALL Christian activity in a locality. A situation has been created by default whereby the local Pastor has replaced the Holy Spirit as the leader of the local body of believers. If you go and do something spiritual outside of the control of your typical local church what happens? You are shunned by the leadership, then the rest of the congregation, in trying to be godly, submissive and respectful to the leaders also shun you, thinking insanely that this is the righteous thing to do because you have 'broken away.'

The disciples had the same mentality but Jesus corrected it.

Now John answered Him, saying, "Teacher, we saw someone who does not follow us casting out demons in Your name, and we forbade him because he does not follow us." But Jesus said, "Do not forbid him, for no one who works

a miracle in My name can soon afterwards speak evil of Me. For he who is not against us is on our side.

Mark 9:38-40

Some chap was discovered preaching the gospel and, read it carefully, *casting out demons in Jesus name*. In other words, helping people, getting them delivered and getting results in an area where actually the disciples hadn't always done too well. In Matthew 17:21 and Mark 9:29 the disciples encountered a demon that they could not cast out. They were not anointed enough. Jesus bemoaned their unbelief and said that this type doesn't come out except by prayer and fasting. Jesus then cast it straight out himself.

So what was the disciples response when someone started succeeding where they had not? Stop him. Ban him. He's not one of us. They actually said, *he does not follow **us**!* In other words, 'he's not under our authority.' Can you believe that! So Jesus, as he did many times, had to correct them. He turned it round and said, *don't forbid him, no one who does something in my name can soon after speak evil of **me***, i.e. it's not about you chaps, it's about me - Jesus! The disciples had said, *he is not one of us*. It wasn't supposed to be about the disciples ministry, it was supposed to be about Jesus. Then Jesus had to make the statement that if someone is not against the gospel then they are for it - so why oppose them?

There were other itinerant Jewish evangelists in those days that were not ever part of Jesus ministry. Some of them had seen success in casting out demons to a moderate degree based on their knowledge of the Old Testament. This chap was not one of them, he was casting out demons in *Jesus name*. There were no other places where he could have learned that except from Jesus' ministry. Jesus had only just appeared on the scene. What does that mean? It means that this preacher must have been part of Jesus' ministry for a while, learnt the ropes and then, yes wait for it...can I use the phrase so beloved of so many Pastors...are you ready - cover your ears - hold on to something solid - he had - **"Gone off and done his own thing!!!!" Aaaarrgh!!!!** Oh! wait a minute, apparently Jesus

didn't have any problem with that.

Like many present day ministers the disciples had started to develop an *us* and *them* mentality. Many church's are the same. If you leave them they accuse you of *breaking away*. Now let's think about that.

If as John 15:5 says Jesus is the Vine and we are the branches and if as 2 Corinthians 5:17 says, if any man is in Christ he is a new creation, how on earth can you by leaving a church be breaking away from anything? You are still in Christ, you are still in the same family so what have you broken away from? The answer is a huge indictment on those who use the expression.

The only thing that you can actually break away from when you leave a church but remain a believer is any part of that church or ministry that was not *in Christ*.

If a leader refers to people as breaking away from their church when they leave it then, this shows that they see themselves and their church in an unbiblical light. In their eyes being in Christ is not enough. If you leave you are no longer one of *them*. One of them what? If they are Christians and so are you then you are still one of them, but if the Pastor had his own little kingdom with a figurehead Jesus and he was really the head honcho, then yes, you have left and broken away from *them*, and it's a good thing that you did! Doubtless you will also have the following scripture pasted on your back as you leave.

They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us.

1 John 2:19

But what is *of us*? Of us can only mean only one thing - in Christ, not of a particular church, denomination or movement. The individuals referred to by John in the above scripture were people who had never been born again not fellow believers who

left a particular fellowship or church.

The real issue is this, the local church, big or small, amazing or not, is not the backbone of the kingdom of God, you are.

"The kingdom of God does not come with observation; nor will they say, 'See here!' or 'See there!' For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you."

Luke 17:20-21

The reality is that people are not primarily equipped and helped to be spiritually mature as Ephesians 4:12 says they should be. Instead people are taught to FOLLOW and OBEY leaders. The net result is that people stay perpetually in varying degrees of immaturity and are at the mercy of whatever wind of doctrine blows around. This approach, so popular with many leaders, actually makes a leader's life harder and undermines their own God given positions. Allow me to explain:

Joe Blogs starts a church, it grows until it gets too big for him to control, he then exhausts himself and quenches his anointing trying to do that. Pastor Joe Blogs now has fear operating in his heart instead of faith, hope and love. With his new fear of losing his church comes a harshness in his character and he resorts to a more authoritarian approach to preserve his church. He decides to teach on submission to sort the mess out. And here is Joe Blogs's fatal error that dooms his ministry. Joe Blogs teaches his congregation to submit to his leadership and to not engage in spiritual activity outside of his authority – bizarrely this may even include not being allowed to regularly visit other churches too. The people are exhorted to submit and obey *the leadership* and to be faithful to *the church*.

So what's wrong with that? Can't you see it? This new approach is catastrophic to Joe Blogs church and ministry. Why? Because he is teaching people to follow *a man* and *a church*. In his mind he assumes that he will always be the man and his will always be the church, but he is wrong. When a more shiny new man and more shiny new church appear, frustrated people in his congregation turn and follow them – *because this is what they*

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have been taught to do! Of course nowadays many Pastors have realised this so they try and keep their church's as shiny as possible.

Within the church things get even worse. Because the congregation now see that the only way they can do anything spiritual is by gaining the favour of or becoming part of the authority structure of the church; this sets off a cascade of ladder climbing, back stabbing, spiritual lynchings and sectarian church splits as everyone vies for a position and influence. Churches that reach this position can quite often spectacularly destroy themselves in remarkably short periods of time.

Meanwhile the various frustrated members of the congregation with a genuine fivefold ministry call follow the usual pattern: they give up on their call and stagnate, or go off on YWAM to the other side of the world OR, yes wait for it – start another church. Which 90% of the time for obvious reasons is in the same local area as the one they are in because that's where they already live.

Then in a bizarre repetition of Joe Blog's mistake the new breakaway Pastor does the whole dumb thing all over again. And so it goes on, the new Pastor teaches and admonishes people to be in full submission and not be independent minded and to follow him (even though he himself recently broke away from the first church). He thereby also sets the scene for his own eventual ministerial doom. He is also afraid of anyone who is capable, gifted and anointed in his church or ministry because he perceives them as a threat, and yet ludicrously he will spend half his time praying for God to send him good strong people to help in the work.

And what is the root of all this mess? Ministers keep trying to lead people instead of empowering them to fulfil their call and teaching them how to be lead by the Holy Spirit. According to the Bible the primary role of the ministry is not to lead but to equip the believer for their ministry. So who leads the believer?

For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you did not receive

the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father." The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.

Romans 8:14-16

If you are a believer you have received the Holy Spirit of adoption, your adoption, who is the Spirit of your Father – God. You are therefore according to the plain reading of scripture, not led by men but by the Spirit of God. If you have made Jesus your Lord then God has adopted you, He is your Father and you are His child. Full stop. Period. God's Spirit witnesses with our spirit that we are His children. The problems start when someone tells you that because you don't know enough yet, that they will lead you on God's behalf. This is a travesty and subtle twisting of the role of leadership.

You can never be too immature to hear God's voice. Even a small child recognises their father's voice. Jesus said:

My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.

John 10:27

It is never valid, not even once, for someone to **tell you** not to listen to what you believe your Heavenly Father is saying to you. If you need wisdom God will always speak to you through His word in a way that you can grasp. Yes, He is smart enough to do that. The purpose of the ministry is to equip you to minister and build God's kingdom, by teaching the word of God to you, not to be God's voice for you and tell you what to do.

If someone sincerely believes that you are wrong about something they should endeavour to show you from the scriptures why they believe you may be wrong and leave you to make your own decision. Anyone telling you that you can't do something because you are supposed to be under their authority and that they forbid it, is not coming from a scriptural position. No man can counter command the plan of God for your life. The same applies to delaying it.

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So when do we follow leaders? Technically we don't, we follow a vision when we believe it's from God and that God wants us to help fulfil in it. In the realm of participating in a leaders vision from God we submit to their leadership solely for the purpose of fulfilling the vision.

And a vision appeared to Paul in the night. A man of Macedonia stood and pleaded with him, saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." Now after he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go to Macedonia, concluding that the Lord had called us to preach the gospel to them.

Acts 16:9-10

Here is a perfect example right from scripture of how we should relate to leaders. The Apostle Paul had a vision. No one else had the vision, only Paul. However Paul's companions Silas and Luke, who is writing the book of Acts, says that after Paul's vision they then sought to go to Macedonia *concluding that the Lord had called us to go preach to them*. Notice *they* concluded that *God* was leading *them* through the vision of *Paul*. This is Biblical, it has to be, it's in the Bible. They did not follow Paul because he was an Apostle.

Here in the scriptures Paul shared his dream and vision. People deliberated about what he said. How do I know this? Because the Bible says they *concluded* that God was calling them to Macedonia. If you conclude something you bring a process to an end. The scriptures here talk about people hearing a vision, deliberating over it and then concluding that it was from God and subsequently following the VISION not the MAN.

Of course it was Paul's vision so he was in charge of the administration of the following of it. This is a no brainer. The Pastor of a church runs the church, they set the service times, they choose what to preach and they appoint other leaders, etc. Why? because it's their vision from God.

Unfortunately some Pastors try and over extend their authority by claiming that if you are in their church that it must logically

follow that since God has put you there you should submit to the leadership and not have things like unauthorised Bible studies in your own home. This is like saying that if God brings a couple together one should accept the others demands that they never go out with their friends. What then was this Pastors vision? A vision of no one else except him doing anything? A vision of all spiritual activity in the locality being either under his control or banned? A vision of a congregation who attend, give and volunteer but who are also forbidden from having prayer meetings in their own homes because the church already has one? That's not a vision from God, that's a vision from pride and selfish ambition. What about Hebrews 13?

Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account.

Hebrews 13:17

Scholars have said that since the Greek verb *obey* here is actually in the passive voice and not active as translated, and that the word translated *leaders* is a participle in the plural genitive not a noun, as translated, that this verse should read:

Be persuaded by the leading ones of you all, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give an account.

Hebrews 11:13

The less mature are commanded to allow themselves to be persuaded, passively, by the more mature among them - and then yield to the accurate handling of the word of God, doctrine and lifestyle. The Apostle Paul said something similar.

Be imitators of me, just as I also *imitate* Christ.

1 Corinthians 11:1

Paul challenged the Corinthians to imitate him imitating Christ, not to obey and submit to him directly. However, even if this verse in Hebrews 13, correctly translated bluntly tells us to obey our leaders, there would still have to be limits to that because the scriptures also tell us to obey our governments, 1

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Peter 2:13. To obey God, James 4:7. To obey the truth of the word, Galatians 3:1. To submit to those who devote themselves to the ministry of the saints and to all who labour and work with a pioneering apostolic ministry, 1 Corinthians 16:16 (don't hear that one quoted much do you?). Moreover wives are to submit to their husbands, Ephesians 5:22, and husbands to their wives by loving them selflessly as a servant like Jesus does the church, Ephesians 5:25. Children obey parents, Colossians 3:20. The younger submit to the older, and all of us to one another, 1 Peter 5:5. Clearly either all of this obeying and submitting must have contexts and limits otherwise the Bible was written by the Mad Hatter.

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

2 Timothy 3:16-17

The Scriptures are what make you whole and complete not special orders from men. Wherever references to church leadership are found in the New Testament there is absolutely zero mention of them directly governing your life. Ministers are never commanded to control and limit your private or spiritual activities, like forbidding you to have prayer meetings, banning you from listening to certain other preachers or stopping you mixing with other believers at local congregations other than the one which you most regularly attend. There is however one rather notable exception, a charming man called Diotrephes. The Apostle John had a few things to say about him.

⁹I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to have the pre-eminence among them, does not receive us. ¹⁰Therefore, if I come, I will call to mind his deeds which he does, prating against us with malicious words. And not content with that, he himself does not receive the brethren, and forbids those who wish to, putting them out of the church.

3 John 1:9-10

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Here we have an early local pastor at a church John wished to visit. How do we know that he was the local Pastor? Because he had *pre-eminence* and was able to *put people out of the church*. Clearly if he was not in charge of the congregation he would not have been able to do this. He obviously enjoyed his pre-eminence and had started to separate himself from the rest of the body of Christ and was taking his congregation with him. He had spoken against the Apostle John with malice, he had rejected other travelling ministers (presumably because they were not under his authority) and forbidden others from partaking of these other ministries, and if they didn't submit to his authority in this matter, he even put them out the church. And John's advice?

Submit to the leadership and God will bless you anyway. Remain under the authority of the local Pastor and even if he is wrong God will take care of that. Be like David was with Saul, just keep tithing there and trust God... Err Hello? No, and just in case you don't understand that I will write it again in block capitals in bold. **NO!**

Beloved, do not imitate what is evil, but what is good. He who does good is of God, but he who does evil has not seen God.

3 John 1:11

John unreservedly says don't imitate and follow evil and that if someone was from God he would be doing good. The concept so often preached of *submitting anyway* is simply nowhere in sight, and if it were true this would be the perfect place for the Apostle John to come up with it. But he doesn't. John goes on to recommend someone else to fellowship with in the very next verse, not several years later.

Demetrius has a good testimony from all, and from the truth itself. And we also bear witness, and you know that our testimony is true.

3 John 1:12

In other words, 'everyone knows Demetrius, the truth itself recommends him, so do we and you know that what we say is

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true, so forget Diotrephes and move on.' How obvious does it need to be? Don't keep following some mini megalomaniac.

As Hebrews 13:17 says, ministry leaders are supposed to watch out for our souls. Our soul cannot be kept by outward coercion. We are not Muslims. The soul is kept by an individual hearing the word of God and responding to it.

...receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.

James 1:21

Peter sums up very well how a leader should lead. Leaders should not lead by compulsion but rather by being inspiring examples. Telling people that it is God's will that they should always obey you, even though you may be wrong about something is definitely compulsion.

The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.

1 Peter 5:1-4

But if I'm not under authority won't I be exposed and the devil will get me. The Bible does not say: *he who goes to church and submits is protected and the wicked one touches him not.* It says:

He who has been born of God keeps himself, and the wicked one does not touch him.

1 John 5:18

Chapter 6

The Devil's True Nature

The devil is the complete antithesis of love. He is control. Everything single thing he ever does is about control. The more controlling a person or organisation is the more like the devil they are.

Many people profoundly misunderstand the devil because they have not studied the scriptural accounts of his fall and because they build a picture of his personality based on the suffering and pain they see he causes in the world.

Let me give you a small revelation. The devil is not in the slightest bit interest in pain and suffering for their own sake. He doesn't seek to administer pain and suffering because he is evil. He seeks to exert total and absolute ruthless control, pain and suffering are just a means to do that. Look at his fall.

**"How you are fallen from heaven,
O Lucifer, son of the morning!
How you are cut down to the ground,
You who weakened the nations!
For you have said in your heart:
'I will ascend into heaven,
I will exalt my throne above the stars of God;
I will also sit on the mount of the congregation
On the farthest sides of the north;
I will ascend above the heights of the clouds,
I will be like the Most High.'"**

Isaiah 14:12-14

The devil's fall did not start with him waking up one morning and deciding to be mean, horrible, really nasty and cause lots of trouble. Surprisingly he didn't even set out to fight against or depose God. I don't believe that for one moment that the thought ever crossed his mind. He knew it was utterly

impossible. What really happened?

First of all he decided he needed a promotion. He said, *I will ascend into heaven*, literally in the Hebrew, *in heaven*. He also decided to exalt his *throne*, i.e. his place of authority above the stars or other angelic beings. *Stars* is a common description for angels in the Old Testament. He was going to *sit...* sit is a common term in Hebrew meaning to *govern from*. He was going to sit and govern from a new place where previously he had not. In this case it was the *mount of congregation* (obviously a high or important place) literally in the Hebrew the place of assembly. Perhaps something like a heavenly Congress or Parliament. He would go to the *farthest sides of the north*. I don't know if there is a literal north in heaven but when associated with the word *farthest* it's clearly a reference to going to some extreme place beyond everyone else. He was also going to *ascend above the heights of the clouds*. Clearly this boy really had a new stratospheric career path mapped out for himself.

Finally, to top it all, he was going to be *like the Most High*. He was going to be like God. In his mind he was going to run the whole show. Notice that the devil's recorded route towards his fall only mentions authority. Surprisingly there are not any mention of attempts at deception at this initial stage or of him becoming horrible and vile. No, the route to evil is through the desire to control. The deception and vileness follow that.

The devil decided he was going to have things done properly, everything was going to be perfectly in order and precisely done. Why, because it outraged him when things weren't done perfectly. And that's what he was interested in, how things were done and how they looked. How do you know that Shenstone, aren't you just making this up? No. Look at Ezekiel 28 another passage which clearly describes the devil's fall.

¹²“You were the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. ¹³You were in Eden, the garden of God...

¹⁵ ...You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created, till iniquity was found in you.

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¹⁶By the abundance of your trading you became filled with violence within, And you sinned...

¹⁷...Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty; You corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendour."

Ezekiel 28:12-17

First of all the main identifiable characteristic about the cherubim who Isaiah 14:12 calls Lucifer before he fell was perfection. He was the seal of perfection v12, he was perfectly beautiful v12, he was in Eden the garden of God (Eden means perfect pleasure), he was perfect in all his ways v15. He was what? He was PERFECT, PERFECT, PERFECT! His name Lucifer even means bright shining star.

All these descriptions and his name reflect what? Lucifer himself, his outward appearance and the way he did things. Contrast these with the Arch Angel Michael's name. Michael in Hebrew *Mykael* (Strong's H4317) translates *who is there like God*. That says a lot doesn't it? Personally I'd go for a name like Michael if I were you.

Lucifer's heart was lifted up because of his beauty, v17. And that's it, most people think right there that the devil was so amazing that it went to his head and that this just about sums up his fall. No, there's more. Yes he was amazing, yes he was perfect but those things were the not real problem. The real problem was everyone else...

¹⁶"By the abundance of your trading you became filled with violence within, and you sinned..."

Ezekiel 28:16

The Hebrew word for *trade* is *rekullah* (Strong's H7404) it literally signifies what you trade as in what you handle. Ezekiel 28 does not say it was the materials of the trade that corrupted Lucifer, but rather the trading itself. Trading always has with it an element of oversight and government. In other words, you have power traversing through you. You are a kind of governor. Isaiah 14 records Lucifer's words as he fell, none of them refer

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to any kind of desire for more possessions. All six declarations relate to one thing and one thing only. Authority

Lucifer's corruption could not have come from the things he did because he was *perfect in all his ways*, Ezekiel 28:15. His corruption began with how he managed what was under his authority. Since things and possessions are not mentioned in his declaration of what he was after in Isaiah 14 there is only one alternative left that was the cause of the problem. How other persons – or angelic beings, responded to his authority.

Lucifer's merchandise, what he traded and handled was authority. When those he governed did not match his perfect standards this struck the core of his being. The Old King James says that what he handled *filled the midst* of him. The New King James says he *became filled with violence within*. The Hebrew word for *midst* in the KJV and *within* in the NKJV is remarkable. It is *tavek* (Strong's H8432) and literally means to *sever* or *cut* down the middle. What happened?

The way Lucifer handled authority became heartless. When those he dealt with fell short, he tried to deal with it by forcing them into perfection. His heartless perfection. It enraged him, it split his personality, it divided him, he became filled with violence. It twisted him, *wicked* literally means twisted.

The wonderful thing that Lucifer had been was lost to his desire to control. The more he focused on perfection the more ruthless he became. To fix the problem he decided to increase his position of authority, to ascend in heaven, to exalt his throne and position of authority, to govern from the mount of congregation, to ascend higher than any other being, to even be like the Most High. All to make everything right yet in the process he violated every rule in the book. Lucifer sinned, he embraced evil as a way to get things done and abandoned love.

And you sinned; therefore I cast you as a profane thing.

Ezekiel 28:16

The Bible says in Ezekiel 28:16 Lucifer sinned and became

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profane. The Hebrew word profane, *chahal* (Strong's H2490) means *dissolving, wounded and broken*. Lucifer broke himself by the forceful way he tried to make everything right. He *corrupted his wisdom for the sake of his splendour*. His splendour was his God given authority. He completely lost the plot. Iniquity was found in him.

**You defiled your sanctuaries,
By the multitude of your iniquities,
By the iniquity of your trading.**

Ezekiel 28:18

There are two different Hebrew words translated as *iniquities* and *iniquity* in verse 18 of Ezekiel 28. The first occurrence is straight forward *wrong doing*. The second, *evel* (Strong's H5766) is derived from *aval* (Strong's H5765) and means to *deal unjustly, or manage something unfairly*, as opposed to simply doing wrong. Lucifer exercised his power unjustly but it made things worse. It didn't improve anything, so he tried to increase his authority to compensate. He attempted to extend his governmental position more and more until he finally tried to put everything under his absolute control - to make everything absolutely right, the way he thought it should be.

Lucifer became a heartless monster, his wisdom and moral judgement were corrupted and he would do (and has done) quite literally anything without a moment of remorse, all to maintain absolute control. The love of God was not his concern. Some ministers are the same, they become a monster while trying to save the world. It's all for the glory of God but the glory of God is what's in God's heart. In the very centre of God's heart is one thing and one thing alone – love. Pure love, absolute love, unconditional love, merciful love, patient love.

Everything God has ever done, is doing and ever will do is only because of love. God is love. The more right you try and make something without love the more wrong it becomes.

God is love.

1 John 4:8

If you want to know God, pray this prayer:

Dear God in Heaven

I am sorry that I have been so wrong about you. Now I see from the Bible that you never wanted me, or anyone else, to shed even a single tear.

I have made many poor choices. Please forgive me.

Thank you that you sent Jesus your Son to pay for all my sins and that you raised him from the dead to give me new life.

I have decided to follow you and I now say out loud –

Jesus is my Lord!

Thank you for giving me a new heart. I will always be real with You and myself. Thank you that you have only good things in store for me.

Amen

If you have prayed this prayer from your heart, you are now a Christian!

God said in the Bible: "I will never leave you nor forsake you." Jesus also said: "Whoever comes to me, I will never cast away." Whatever challenges you may face, always remember that God never rejects you, and that He is not responsible for the unjust things in your life. Rise above them.

Ask God to guide you everyday. Read the Bible and ask God to help you understand it. Check out: www.martynshenstone.com

Yours in Jesus

Martyn Shenstone