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THE REIGNING AUTHORITY OF JESUS CHRIST IN HIS CHURCH
by Paris Reidhead

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Summary: The sermon emphasizes the necessity of recognizing and submitting to the authority of Jesus Christ as the head of the Church for effective ministry and spiritual growth.

Duration: 34:56 Topics: "Headship Of Jesus"
Scripture References: Matthew 6:33, Ephesians 4:12

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DESCRIPTION

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In this sermon, the preacher takes the audience back in time to an island in the Mediterranean 1800 years ago. He describes an elderly man who had a close relationship with Jesus and shares what this man wrote about his encounter with Jesus. The preacher then focuses on a passage from Ephesians 4, highlighting three points about the role of pastors, teachers, and evangelists in the church. He emphasizes the importance of understanding and fulfilling these roles for the perfecting, work, and edification of the saints. The sermon concludes with a reminder of the significance of scripture and the need to honor God in all things.

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CONTENT

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How we do adore Thee, Thou God of all grace, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that Thou didst love the world and give Thy Son, that He loved the world and gave Himself, and Thou hast highly exalted Him and given Him a name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, things in earth, things in heaven, that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, through the glory of God the Father. We ask Thee, Father, today that the eyes of our minds and hearts may be opened to see Him, and to hear Him, and to honor Him as He deserves to be honored. In His worthy name and for His sake we ask Him.

Amen. Now, you have been provided by the kindness of Pastor Sternemann with a piece of paper you can use to make notes. There won't be notes given to you as there have been in the past, and so I'm asking you to note some of these scriptures, because remember this, the scripture is what God said, and the message is what the speaker thinks God meant.

If you have to remember one or the other, you do well always to remember the scripture. By making note of it, you will be able to follow in our thinking. The subject is the reigning authority of Christ in the church, and we have two texts.

One you've already had read for you in Ephesians, the first chapter, and the 22nd verse. And He, God, has put all things under His, the Lord Jesus' feet, and gave Him to be the head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all. Gave Him to be the head over all things to the church.

And if you will turn please to Colossians, the first chapter in the 18th verse, Colossians 1 18. And He, Christ, is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He might have the preeminence. One of the last editorials that Dr. A. W. Tozer wrote and published while he was still editor of the Alliance Witness, had this subject, the reigning authority of Christ in His church.

Dr. Tozer observed that over the centuries the church had begun to appear like other organizations. It had its body of directors, its governors, its leaders, its committees, its conferences, both in local and in its larger jurisdictions. Public relations, political and financial pressures all exerted on the church and through the church to accomplish whatever purposes seemed good to the leaders.

And in all of this there seemed to be little or no concern to find out exactly what the head of the church, the Lord Jesus Christ, was interested in. Other attenders took the place of the one that he had given, and so his title of the reigning authority of the church was appropriate. He observed that in some cases the communities of people would strive to serve the work, and the work was almost deified.

For the good of the work, for the sake of the work, in some cases it was almost as though human sacrifice, such as was offered by the pagans in

other days, would be offered in terms of getting rid of people for the good of the work. Dr. Tozer's concern was, could we not come back and sit at the feet of the Lord Jesus Christ and recognize that he is indeed

the head of the church? In this first anniversary of Trinity Alliance Church, I think it's appropriate that we should have an announcement made to any and all who are concerned to hear it, that this company of believers are totally committed to the reigning authority of Jesus Christ in the church. He is, by our choice, to be the head over all things to the church.

As we look at the texts that are before us, we see that there are certain sequential observations we should make. For instance, we find that his authority has been declared in the scripture. I've already given to you the text, head over all things to the church.

Now it seems to me that that's clear, that we should have no argument with it. It's in Ephesians in those words. It's in the epistle of Paul to the Colossians in those words.

He has been raised from the dead, seated at the right hand of the Father, and all authority in heaven and earth has been committed unto him. So it would seem as though we should have no argument at all, no question at all, about the fact that he has declared and has been declared of him that he does have all authority. But in the fourth chapter of Ephesians and in the 11th verse, we discover that he has done certain other things.

For instance, in verse 11 we are told, I'm going to go earlier, just a bit higher to verse 8. Wherefore he says when he ascended up on high, he

led the captivity captive and he gave gifts unto men. After he had ascended into heaven, he poured forth the Holy Spirit and with the pouring forth of the Spirit came those supernatural enablements we've known as the gifts of the Spirit, by which he was giving back to his church those abilities that had been lost under our servitude of Satan.

And as O'Dw Tozer on another occasion said, the gifts of the Spirit are not new.

There has never been time in the history of the church that the church did not survive because the hand had given to his body those special enablements whereby it could indeed survive against all of the attacks of a defeated foe. So he gave power, he gave ability to men. But he also gave men to the church.

He gave people to the church in the 11th verse in Ephesians 4 11. And

he

gave some apostles and some prophets and some evangelists and some pastors and teachers. These were individuals given by the head of the church to the church.

Now it's been very difficult for us to identify the apostles. I think that the consensus of most expositors is that the apostles referred to here would be those whom we would know as the 11 apostles and then Paul

as appointed to replace Judas. That company of people who had the authority to establish the testimony concerning Christ.

And prophets would be those who spoke forth the word prior to perhaps the completion of the scripture. Whether we can identify them today or not remains a problem that has yet to be settled by those who seek to execute the word of God, study the word of God. But be it thus that any

who claim to be apostles and prophets should by the very claim be discounted.

Because there is certainly very little authority for that for an individual in our day and time. But we do recognize that these other three continue with the church until the present. The evangelist is the

good newsizer, the church planter, or if you please the foreign missionary carrying the gospel into the areas where it's never gone.

And he gave some to be evangelists. Oh in a sense we use the word as those who come to minister in our congregations that there probably are

would be other terms any of the other two terms would be appropriate. But in a unique sense those that go out and carry the gospel the good news for the first time and plant the church where it hasn't been planted.

Which seem to be the ones who are here designated evangelists and pastors. Well this is a word that is used also of elders and of bishops.

And then we find that he gave teachers and usually the teacher would be the elder that was worthy of double honor.

The one who had the gift to teach, apt to teach, and who would be separated by the community to function as we generally think of the pastor. Now it's also true that the apostle speaking for the Lord Jesus

Christ, Paul writing to Titus, to the young man Titus, was very explicit

in what he had to say about the elders. And I think we should read it so

that we get this in view and we see what the Lord Jesus Christ has said about the church and how it's to be administered.

In Titus chapter 1 in verse 5 Paul says to the young man, for this cause I left thee in Crete that thou should have set in order the things that are wanting and ordain elders in every city as I had appointed thee. If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children, not accused of riot or unruly. For a bishop must be blameless as the steward of God, not self-willed, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre, but a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate.

And so Titus was instructed as to those characteristics that should mark the elder and the bishop and the pastor. For all three words apply to the same people, same person. Older in experience, spiritually mature.

That's the first word, presbyteros, from which comes our word presbyterian. And then bishops, overseers, episkopos, and then pastors by man, which means shepherd. And so it was that he gave elders who were also called bishops, who were also to function as shepherds, who were to minister in the local church.

Now these were given by Christ, the head of the church, not to that they were to usurp his authority, but they were to recognize and administer his authority. So we've seen something of the equipment that he gave gifts and people. But I would like to have you see that scripture also is very precise when it describes the administration of his authority.

We must see that. We must understand what he has said about it. So we continue in Ephesians, the fourth chapter.

And we notice that in the next verse, verse 12, he tells us what these elders, who are also called bishops and pastors, are to accomplish, what the teachers are to accomplish. Notice verse 12, in the King James, which I'm using, it says, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ. Years ago, when

I was pastor of First Baptist Church of Little Falls, Minnesota, I came to Saturday night and didn't have a message for Sunday morning.

I worked on it. No, it wasn't that I hadn't worked. It's just that I wasn't comfortable with anything that I had.

And so the result was that I was reading in my devotions during the week, Ephesians, for many, many weeks. I read it devotionally, one chapter a day throughout the week. And I had remembered that in the 12th verse of Ephesians 4, on the Thursday of that week, because it was just one chapter each day, I had seen three points.

Look at them. And for a preacher that needs three points, this is ideal, isn't it? Notice, he gave pastors and teachers and evangelists for the perfecting of the saints, number one. For the work of the ministry, number two.

For the edifying of the body of Christ, number three. So Sunday morning, I got up and I had a message on the threefold ministry of the pastor. I put it all down to him because I knew about him.

I was him, you see, not talking about me. But I got the feeling as I went through that message that it was very lonely. The Lord didn't seem to be helping me.

It was like dragging a sled over gravel. Sparks were flying from the runners. I had no means of movement at all.

And that Monday when I got back to my study, I said, I better find out what it was the word said. So I did on Monday what I should have done on Saturday. And you know what I discovered? That what that text says is this.

He gave evangelists and pastors and teachers for the perfecting of the saints into the work of the ministry, onto the building up of the body of Christ. That's some different than what I interpreted to mean. He didn't give the elders to do the work for the church, but to train and mature and develop the people of the congregation into the work of the ministry.

And the work of the ministry was to be done by the people in the congregation. Now, I can understand that the King James translators

made

an error. And because they were doing the best they could.

And by the way, they did a very good job. I often say if it was good enough for Paul, it's good enough for me. But there are those that don't

find the humor in that.

They don't understand that it was 1511 when the King James authorized the translation. Sometime after Paul had graduated into the presence of

the Lord. So, we have just this, that we still don't have it clear.

He gave evangelists and pastors and teachers for the maturing of the saints into the work of the ministry. Not to do it for them, but to show

them how and teach them. Notice what he said.

First, perfecting the saints is literally maturing, growing up. In other

words, Paul did not want to preside over a playpen full of spiritual infants 30 years after they'd been born and gone. He wasn't there with a

playpen on coaster, trying to drag it through time and present it to the

Lord and say, here are your babes, Lord.

Still the way they were born. Any more than a parent wants to take a 30-year-old or a 40-year-old, as in the case of one of our families in New York, Dabberdackle, that had a two-year-old mind and ability. Oh, what a heartache.

Oh, what a grief to those dear parents that through the years had seen this little girl that had suffered from disease that had stopped all mental growth. And so is a 40-year-old woman still with a two-year-old mind. And sometimes when I think how our heavenly father must feel when

he sees people 10, 15, 20, 30 years into the Christian life, but still with the emotional, mental, spiritual abilities of infants.

They have to be fathom fed, can't care for themselves, can't have no ability to eat meat. And this is what Paul said, no, no, no. He gave evangelists and pastors and teachers for the maturing of the saints.

Growing up, coming up to adulthood into the work of the ministry, onto the edifying building up of the body of Christ. Now, that's his purpose,

that every single believer should grow up into him. Why? Because he wants the believers to come in the unity of the faith and in the knowledge of the son of God unto a mature man, under the measure of

the
stature of the fullness of Christ.

He wants everyone to grow up like Christ. Jesus increased in wisdom,
in
stature, and in favor with God and man. And he wants everyone born
into
the father's family through faith in Christ, so to grow.

His purpose, therefore, was maturity. And the evidence and proof that
that purpose is being realized is in the 14th verse. There will
henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro and carried about
with
every wind of doctrine by the sleight of men and cunning craftiness
whereby they lie in wait to deceive.

Not children fighting and fussing in every little whim with an
interest
span of a half a minute. And this little doctrine and that little
trick
and that little gimmick, and they run and chase the blowing leaves
like
a puppy just off the leash. And so he said, no, we don't want to be
children any longer.

We want to grow up into Christ. We want to become adults in our
spiritual lives. And then he also gave to us the procedure.

Why this tension on maturing from whom the whole body fitly joined
together and compacted by that which every joint suppliant, according
to
the effectual working in the measure of every part, make an increase
of
the body under the building up of itself in love. Every member of the
body of Christ to grow up into Christ. Some time ago, I was talking
with
one of our family, one member of the family, a statement was made.

I am so weary of every Sunday hearing sermons just on salvation, on
forgiveness, eternal life. I want to be fed and nurtured in the things
of the Lord. I want to grow.

And you can only grow by the word. Well, that's normal. Normal for us
to
want to grow.

Have you ever heard your children say, when I grow up, I'm going to?
Well, if it's normal for our children to recognize that there are
certain joyous privileges and responsibilities of growing up. So it
ought to be with us in the things of the Lord. We want to grow up into

Christ.

That's his procedure. We got it here. The plan, everybody, given these men with gifts to minister so that we'll grow.

And the purpose that we should grow, and the proof, no more children. And the end, ultimate end, the building up, the edifying, block upon block, brick upon brick of the body of Christ. Well, let's see this authority of Christ illustrated in closing, shall we? I suggest that we go to the book of Revelation.

And in Revelation, we find the head of the church exercising his authority. In Revelation, the second chapter, verses four and five, the Lord Jesus, by John, speaks to the church at Ephesus. And he says, nevertheless, I have something against thee, because thou hast left thy first love, you Ephesians.

Remember, therefore, from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first work, or else I will come unto thee quickly and remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent. But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. Who is this speaking? It's the head of the church, the reigning authority, Jesus Christ.

Head over all things to the church. What does he say? They've left their first love. And what is he saying? Unless you repent, unless you return, I will come again and take the candlestick from you.

And when you go to Ephesus, what do they show you? A thriving, vibrant church? No. They show you a pile of rocks, and the candlestick is gone. Why? Because they sinned against the head of the church.

They left their first love, they did not repent. But they did one thing. They hated the teaching of the Nicolaitans.

But let's look at the church at Pergamos in chapter 2, verse 12. And to the angel of the church at Pergamos write, These things say of thee which hath the sharp sword with two edges, I know thy works and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is. And thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my face, even in those days wherein Antipas

was thy faithful martyr, whose slain among you were Satan dwelling.

But I have a few things against thee, because thou is there then that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication. And now listen, so hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate. Christ, the Ephesians hated the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, and Pergamos held to the doctrine.

What is this doctrine of the Nicolaitans? Look at it for a moment. Nicolaitans, does that remind you of a word? The word laity comes directly from the word Nicolaitans. And the concept of clergy and laity was the invention of that church at Nicolaita that had sinned against God.

And thus it was that they were said to have held the doctrine, which what is it? Dividing the congregation into clergy and laity. What did we say his purpose was? He gave elders for the perfecting of the saints into the work of the ministry. Everyone who names the name of Jesus Christ, everyone upon whom the promise of the father of the holy spirit is given, is to be a witness for Christ, and labor for Christ, and bear fruit for Christ to the glory of God the father.

But we've divided. We fail to understand the authority of Christ. And so we've embraced the hated doctrine of the Nicolaitans as though it were orthodoxy.

And yet we ask God to bless us. How can he bless what he has said to hate? It is therefore for us to recognize that in the body of Christ there is no such delineation as clergy and laity. What do you mean? Are there not those ordained? Yes.

Are there not those with special ministries? Yes. Are they not set apart for separate tasks? Yes. But they're set apart to serve Christ in the bringing up of every member of his body into maturity and into the work of the ministry, the building of the body of Christ.

Not to do it for them. Well, if we once see this, then we understand

how
terribly important it is for us to recognize the sovereignty of the
head
over all things to the church. I close now by taking you back to the
first chapter.

We've sung, and oh how our hearts have been blessed as we've sung
concerning the majesty of Christ and the authority of Christ and the
name of Christ. We've talked about his authority declared, his
authority
described, and his authority illustrated. And now in closing, I want
you
to go with me to an island in the Mediterranean.

I want you to go back in time 1,800 years. I want you to sit down on
the
rocks beside an ancient venerable man now some 90 years of age, a man
who leaned on Jesus bosom, a man who walked with him, and I want you
to
hear what he wrote. With eyes closed and heart open, I was in the
spirit
of the Lord, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and he girt
about
the packs with a golden girdle.

His head and his hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and his
eyes were as a flame of fire, and his feet like under fried grass, as
if
they'd burned in a furnace, and his voice is the sound of many waters,
and he had in his right hand seven stars, and out of his mouth were
the
sharp two-edged sword, and his countenance was as the sun shineth in
his
strength. When I saw him, I fell at his feet as death, and he laid his
right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not, I am the first and the
last. I am he that liveth and was dead, and behold, I am alive
forevermore, and have the keys of hell and death.

O father of Jesus, poor John, facing the wrong way, remembering the
good
old days, looking back to how it was when he leaned on Jesus closely,
when he heard the Lord Jesus call him to leave his nets and follow
him,
looking back to seeing the Lord on the seashore who boiled a breakfast
of fish, telling all who came to him about the good old days, and how
he
remembered Christ. When John said, I heard a voice behind me, he was
looking the wrong way, he was looking to yesterday, to the good old
days. O father of Jesus, save us from looking back to any yesterday,
however rich and blessed it was, and put into our hearts the grace to

turn and see the Lord Jesus as he is, high and lifted up, seated upon
a
throne, and his train fills the temple, and the seraphim cry a holy,
holy, holy Lord God Almighty.

Grant that we with John may join him on our faces, as though we're
dead
to ourselves, that we might be alive unto him, that having seen the
Lord
Jesus as he is, not as he was, but as he is, high and lifted up with
the
name above every name, we gladly fall at his feet and recognize his
sovereignty that he has had over all things to the church, and we
learn
how to do Bible things in Bible ways to the glory of the Lord Jesus
Christ. Thank you for your presence with us, thank you for the year
you've given us, thank you for the future, thank you our father that
we
dare, we'll not talk about the waning authority of Christ in the
church,
but the reigning authority of Christ in his church, and be among that
number that recognize that authority, and gladly submit to that
lordship, and walk together in honor and total commitment to him, that
through our blood ransomed lives, he the lamb that was slain might
receive the reward of his suffering. To that end our father we ask
thee
now, that thou would bless our meditation in the word, and let the
word
of God have precourse and be glorified in us.

We ask your thanksgiving in Jesus name.

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