

August 6, 2009

Text: 1 Samuel 15:22-23

Title: Honor God's Authority

Let me ask you a question. I asked my students this question when I was teaching seminary, and they never got it. So this is like, "Are you smarter than a seminary student?"

What makes a church? I think we'd all agree that church is not a place that you go, amen? Church is not a building, it's the people, right? We are a church, but we meet in a school, we have no building, but we are still a church. Well Bro. Mark, Anytime Christians gather together they form the church. So, You put 50 Christians in a room together, are they a church, or just a collection of Christians? 5 Christian brothers get together to watch a football game, are they a church? Well Bro Mark the Christians have to gather for worship, but anytime Christians get together to worship, that's church. Is it? So you have this band come to town and they hold a Christian concert and you have 5,000 Christians come together in one place and they worship, and the Spirit of God moves and He is glorified, and lost people are even saved. Is that a church? Some people would say yes. Personally I say no. and this is the reason why. When the concert is over those 5,000 Christians will get in their cars and go home, and will probably never come together as that same group ever again. That is why they are not a church. To put it technically, there never was a "Group Identity." These people were never related to each other. They never formed a body, there was nothing that held them together.

I believe that for a group of Christians to form a church there has to be a covenant relationship between them. There has to be a shared understanding that we exist as a group, we are a permanent body of believers working together to accomplish God's will. When you join a church what you are really doing is

you are entering into the covenant that the members of that church share. You enter into the covenant when you join a church. Does that make sense? Now I'll admit that most churches don't make a big deal over their covenant. It's something that they stick into their legal documents, and nobody knows what the covenant says, or cares.

But I've been praying lately. In fact I've been praying over some way to lead and teach new Christians. How to help new believers set down firm foundation in the faith. I've been looking for some discipleship material that would help people grow and mature in Jesus, and God brought me back to our covenant. He said this is it. It kind of makes sense when you think about it, that the covenant of the church ought to be the foundation of the church's discipleship program. Here is the standard that we will hold ourselves to. Here is the foundation of our discipleship. Here are the principles and truths that we believe are central to living the Christian life. I believe that if anyone consistently lived out these principles, their life would be better, their faith stronger, their walk with Jesus closer than ever before.

I mean think about it, these principles are the foundation of what walking with Jesus is all about.

- 1. Honor God's Authority.**
- 2. Keep yourself morally pure**
- 3. Speak the truth, in love, and keep your mouth under control**
- 4. Use your time wisely**
- 5. Be a Steward of God's possessions**
- 6. Discover your place to serve in God's kingdom'**
- 7. Keep growing until you are just like Jesus.**

That's not bad right. It may not be perfect, but I think that pretty well sums up what walking the walk is all about.

So here is my challenge to you. I'm going to be preaching through these principles for the next few weeks. I'm going to be looking at each one of these ideas real close. If you are a

member of Open Gate I'd like to challenge you to commit yourself to living out these principles in your life. So here is what I want you to do. Sign a copy of the church covenant, fold it up real tight, and put it in your bible. Keep it someplace where you will remember it. I don't want to see it. I want you to see it. I want it to be in your heart and your mind that you have made this covenant with God and with our church. That piece of paper is not worth a dime, if your heart's not in it. It is the commitment of your own heart that will keep you walking on the right path, and this covenant is a tool that will help you.

Now this morning we are going look at the first of these principles, Honoring God's authority. In the text that we read earlier Samuel asks Saul a question. Which is better in God's sight, to go through the motions of being religious, or to submit to God's authority. It is better to have a submissive and obedient attitude for God, because Rebellion is just as bad as witchcraft, and if you are arrogant you might as well worship some other god. That tells me something. It tells me that God takes this principle of authority very seriously.

- I. The Central Question of the Christian Life.**
 - A. What is the central question of the Christian life?**
 - 1. What is the central question of the living out the Christian life?**
 - 2. Let me explain. It seems to me that there is one issue that almost everyone hangs up on.**
 - 3. There is one single idea that is a problem for almost everyone when it comes to walking with Jesus.**
 - 4. Once you get past this one thing everything else just kind of falls into place.**
 - 5. I serious, there is one central question to the Christian life, and some people struggle here for years, and never get past it. And once you get past this one thing, everything else is easy.**

6. **Well Bro. Mark I believe that it has to be the question of what kind of music is appropriate for a worship service. This long haired music just can't honor God. No, that aint it.**
 7. **Well Bro. Mark the central question of the Christian life must be the doctrine of free will versus predestination. Close, but that aint it.**
- B. Submission to authority**
1. **The central question of the Christian life is "Who gets to be in Charge?"**
 2. **It is a question of authority and submission. It is a question of surrender.**
 3. **Is Jesus Lord of my life, or is Jesus an consultant who gives me advice.**
 4. **Once you resolve this question everything else in the Christian life comes easy.**
 5. **Do I have quit smoking if I'm a Christian? Who's in charge.**
 6. **Do I have to pay a tithe? Who's in charge?**
 7. **Can I live with my girlfriend or do we have to get married? Who's in charge?**
 8. **I don't want to love - - - THEM! Who's in Charge?**
- C. Every day is a brand new struggle over authority.**
1. **You see the central issue of The Christian life is not about doctrine, it's not about this church or that church.**
 2. **The Central issue of the Christian life is not about the clothes you wear, or the music that you listen to.**
 3. **It's about a daily decision that I have to make about who gets to be in charge of my life, ME or JESUS.**
 4. **Who gets the right to make decisions, ME or JESUS.**
 5. **And in a moment of temptation, or decision or crisis and I am faced with a choice between my**

way and God's way, I have to give it up, and say OK Jesus, we'll do it your way.

II. A simple plan to know God's mind.

A. Quit reading the Bible.

- 1. If you are serious about honoring God's authority then you have got to settle the question of who's in charge.**
- 2. You have to make a commitment that when you understand God's will you will do it.**
- 3. And you have to make a commitment to seek to understand God's will.**
- 4. Awe now you see, I know what some of you were thinking. As long as I don't know what God wants, then I can do as I please right? I'm just going play stupid.**
- 5. You can't fool God like that.**
- 6. Ephesians 5:8-10 For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light 9(for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) 10 and find out what pleases the Lord. NIV**
- 7. Proverbs 24:11-12 Rescue those being led away to death; hold back those staggering toward slaughter. 12 If you say, "But we knew nothing about this," does not he who weighs the heart perceive it? Does not he who guards your life know it? Will he not repay each person according to what he has done? NIV**
- 8. If you are going to honor God's authority then you have to understand how God thinks, and you have to know what God wants and the way to get there is through consistent dedicated Bible study and prayer.**
- 9. So here is what I want each of you to do. I want you to stop reading the bible, and I want you to stop saying prayers.**

B. Why read the Bible?

- 1. What are you talking about fat boy? I don't think I heard you right!**
- 2. Yea you heard me, I said I want you to quit reading the bible, and I want you to stop saying prayers.**
- 3. Here is the reason. Why and how do most Christians read the bible?**
- 4. Most Christians read the bible because they believe that its part of their religious obligations.**
- 5. They read the Bible because they think that will please God. God will bless them if they read the bible every day. Just the act of opening their bible and looking at the page, pleases God.**
- 6. If they don't read the bible every day, that makes God angry. God will not bless them if they don't read the bible every day.**
- 7. They have to read the bible every day, wether they want to or not. I'll read it, but I won't enjoy it.**
 - a. Kind of like taking a big does of castor oil when you were a kid, tastes horrible, but its good for you.**
 - b. Here read this every day - yuch!**
- 8. So what many Christians do, in order to fulfill the bare minimum of their religious obligations, is the pick up a little personal devotional book like Open Windows, or Guide Posts, or Daily Bread. And they read one verse from the bible and about half a page of what someone thinks about what that verse just said, and they call that their daily bible reading.**
- 9. That's nothing. There isn't enough meat there to keep a sparrow alive. There's nothing especially wrong with it, its just shallow.**
- 10. I want you to stop reading the bible. I want you to start studying the bible.**

- C. Reading the bible shows us how God thinks.**
- 1. I don't want anyone to think that reading your bible is something that you do as an obligation, or a way to please God by itself.**
 - 2. Studying your bible is not something you do for God. Its something you do for you.**
 - 3. Studying the bible help you to understand how God thinks. What God likes. What pleases God, and what makes God mad.**
 - 4. You read, when Abraham did this God responded this way. And when David did that, God reacted that way.**
 - 5. As you study the bible you get more than just the commands of God, those are pretty cut and dry. But more than that, little by little you begin to draw into the thoughts of God, the heart of God.**
 - 6. When you really study the bible, and dig out the truth in it, you begin to hear God's heart beat.**
 - 7. But you can't do that with one verse a day so you can check off daily bible reading.**
 - 8. I want to challenge you to spend 1/2 an hour every day studying the bible. Don't go for speed or distance. If you only get one chapter, but you really dig out the truth in that Chapter, that's great.**
 - 9. Don't do it out of obligation, do it to know God.**
 - 10. Your bible study needs to grow out of the attitude that says, I have wrestled with the central question, and Jesus you are in charge. I want to obey, but before I can obey you, I have to know you. I need to understand your heart, and your mind, your will and your ways. So I am going to dig into your word, so I can live out your truth.**
 - 11. When you do that, when you come to the bible with that attitude, your study of the bible will become much sweeter.**

III. A simple plan to understand God's will.

A. Quit saying prayers

- 1. And I want you to quit saying prayers.**
- 2. By now most of you are way ahead of me. I told you that I want you to stop reading the bible and start studying the bible**
- 3. I want you to stop saying prayers and start praying.**
- 4. Someone here might be thinking, Well Mark, what's the difference? Results.**
- 5. Here is how it works. When you are saying prayers you are praying out of habit. You have gotten yourself into a pattern of praying at a certain time, and in a certain way.**
- 6. It's a now I lay me down to sleep kind of prayer, and you say the same words, in the same way, for the same things day after day after day.**
- 7. You have memorized your own prayer, and you just recite it back to God, and your own mind wanders away. Have you ever lost your place in your prayer? If you lost your place its cause you weren't there in the first place.**
- 8. I mean its no wonder that God doesn't hear your prayers when you aren't listening to yourself.**

B. Why pray?

- 1. Let me ask you this. Why pray? Why are you coming to God in the first place? What's your point?**
- 2. Well I am praying because I have this problem in my life and I want to tell God how to fix it.**
- 3. I need to inform God of the areas where I expect him to be working in my life this morning.**
- 4. If I don't pray, how will God know what I want him to do?**

5. **Isn't that the way it works with most of us? Our prayers are lists of the things that we want God to do. God heal these people. God move in these areas. God change these situations.**
 6. **I mean we talk about living in submission to God and then in our prayers we try to make God be our servant.**
 7. **Well Mark, I don't understand, How am I supposed to pray then?**
- C. Praying puts you into partnership with God.**
1. **Well lets remember some basic facts, ok?**
 - a. **God is smarter than you are. Amen?**
 - b. **God has a plan in every situation. Amen?**
 - c. **God's plans always work.**
 2. **So here is what happens,**
 - a. **We find ourselves in a situation, and we go in prayer to inform God about it.**
 - b. **God already knew about our situation before we did, and he already has a perfect plan for how to resolve it.**
 - (1) **And God's plan includes some kind of faith response on our part. God wants us to do something as a part of his plan.**
 - (2) **Our part may be to wait, it may be to endure patiently, or it may be to take some kind of action, but God is going to want us to do something.**
 - c. **So we go to God and inform him of our situation, and then we instruct God in how we expect God to move to solve our problem.**
 3. **Do you see where this is going? We are praying in cross directions to the will of God. We are not submitting to God's authority, we are actually taking authority over God in prayer.**
 4. **So how should you pray? You come to God knowing that:**

- a. **He loves you and because he loves you he cares about what's best for you.**
 - b. **That he is wise enough to know what to do**
 - c. **He is powerful enough to make it work.**
5. **Then you pray, Father I know you have a will and a purpose for me in this situation. I want to please you and obey you in every thing that I do.**
 6. **So my prayer is that you will show me what you want and then help me to do your will.**
 7. **Now that's a prayer the God will honor.**
 8. **As you honor God's authority his presence will come alive in you. And you will begin to experience God in a way like never before.**

1 Sam 15:22-23**22 But Samuel replied:****"Does the LORD delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the LORD?****To obey is better than sacrifice,****and to heed is better than the fat of rams.****23 For rebellion is like the sin of divination,
and arrogance like the evil of idolatry.****NIV**