



June 13, 2010

Invoking Authority

The practice of acting on behalf of someone is a common concept. Wives sign checks for their husbands, parents sign on behalf of their children and government agencies provide rubber stamps (or digital files) with the signatures of officials that have the power to authorize transactions or grant permission to act. There are two conditions with each of these circumstances that are implied. The first is that the individual or institution acting as a proxy is recognized by the granting authority. The second is that the recognition of the delegate by the authorizing entity is based on qualifications that have been met. A notary public, for example, must meet and ascribe to certain conditions and limitations in order to perform their services. Police officers and others are trained and tested on their knowledge which details the manner and scope of their behavior, and take an oath that they will abide by those conditions discharging their duties in a prescribed manner. We understand and live with these things everyday. There are many claiming to represent God demonstrating some spiritual knowledge of the Lord. When one becomes associated with a religious group they don't necessarily check the credentials of those claiming to represent God. We are learning to be more cautious due to an increase in fraud. Impersonating a police officer or other official is a crime and this happens from time to time. There are governing bodies that confirm whether a person is their representative or not, but when it comes to spiritual things most folks don't know what the criteria are. We don't think of someone who is not teaching the truth as one who is inappropriately invoking or empowering themselves in the name of the Lord but that is exactly what happens. The problem is identifying when this is taking place. There are some tests that show us if someone is teaching the truth or not. Does the individual teach God's word and that only. Peter stated that if a man speaks he should speak as the oracles of God (**1 Pet 4.11**). Paul expresses the reliability of what we find in the scriptures because it is God's revelation (**2 Tim 3.16**) and we have no need for anything else. It sounds harsh to say that if anyone teaches anything else we shouldn't listen to them because they are false teachers. John states, "***If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.***" (**2 John 10-11**). Does someone trying to influence you spiritually refer to any other book but the New Testament? Do they avoid certain passages and questions? Does the individual dismiss your concerns as naïve? These are all traits of false teachers. There also false teachers who will soothe one's spiritual worries by assuring folks that everything is well and there is nothing to worry about. God warns his people about false prophets and teachers. Moses spoke of this in his farewell address to the Israelites. "***But the prophet, which shall presume to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or that shall speak in the name of other gods, even that prophet shall die.***" (**Deut 18.20**). The New Testament contains similar warnings. Christ cautioned his disciples about this (**Matt 24.24**) preparing them for the time when they would have to contend with falsehood. Peter and John both warn about false teachers (**2 Pet 2.1, 1 John 4.1**). There are many people today, as there were in the first century, who invoke the power of God claiming to represent him but fall far short of what the scriptures reveal. The hardest thing for most folks to realize is that there are so many who are wrong. Speaking of the path that leads to salvation, Christ stated, "***...strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.***" (**Matt 7.14**). What is harder to understand is why more folks don't allow the scriptures to speak for themselves and just do what we find in the scriptures. That is much simpler than some of the things that are passed off as the authority of God.

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