

"For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to battle?" 1 Corinthians 14:8

KJV

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"Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls..." Jeremiah 6:16

Sounding Out The Faith

July 2023

Biblical Doctrine of Church Authority

"And when he was come into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came unto him as he was teaching, and said, By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority? And Jesus answered and said unto them, I also will ask you one thing, which if ye tell me, I in like wise will tell you by what authority I do these things. The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven, or of men? And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say unto us, Why did ye not then believe him? But if we shall say, Of men; we fear the people; for all hold John as a prophet. And they answered Jesus, and said, We cannot tell. And he said unto them, Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things." Matthew 21:23-27

The answer to both of the questions posed in the passage above were the same; it was by Heaven's authority that John preached and baptized (see John 1:6,23; Isaiah 39:3 and Malachi 3:1) and that Jesus preached and did miracles. Authority has been an important issue through the ages no doubt. It was important in the Law, to Jesus in the New Testament, and even to the Pharisees. To be clear, when the Bible speaks about authority, it is essentially laying out whom God has set in order to execute the rules and regulations that He has sovereignly legislated.

There are many Old Testament examples of the cost of going against those who God ordained to carry out His will. Let us consider Korah in Numbers 16:1-50. Korah was first cousins with Aaron and Moses. He was the son of Izhar who was brother to Amram, Moses and Aaron's father, of the tribe of Levi. (see Exodus 6:16-25) He was extremely close to being in that priestly line of Aaron but wasn't.

You can understand his desire to "help" Moses and Aaron, but the bottom line is that he was not authorized to serve the Lord in that capacity. Unfortunately, he didn't take heed to God's order but rather rebelled and it cost him and thousands of others their lives. The Lord made it a point in verses 36-40 that no one in Israel was to usurp the executive authority He gave to the priests (see Exodus 28:1) in offering incense before Him. Examples like this should make us pause and consider how important authority is to God.

"Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them. And when they saw him, they worshipped him: but some doubted. And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen." Matthew 28:16-20

The Great Commission is an extension of the same principle that we just considered in the Old Testament. Jesus, the Sovereign, Divine, Law Giver of the New Testament appointed His Church to be at a specific place at a specific time to reiterate His marching orders for them when He left this earth. We see in John 20:19-23 that as the Father sent Jesus, Jesus sent His Church. There are many things to consider and take away from these passages alone, but let's focus on that word "sent." Is being "sent" a casual filler word or does it carry serious weight to God? Romans 10:13-15 gives us the order in which someone comes to know Christ as their

personal Savior. Needless to say, we ought to pay very close attention to God's words and the order He establishes in this passage.

"For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!" Romans 10:13-15

Whosoever calls can be saved. Amen! In order to call, they must believe. Absolutely! In order for them to believe they must hear the Gospel. Makes sense! In order for them to hear the Gospel they need a preacher to preach to them. No brainer! In order for them to preach they must be sent....wait, what?

You see God has an order. He has given His local, New Testament Churches executive authority to preach the Gospel that lost souls may be saved and come unto the knowledge of the Truth. (see 1 Timothy 2:3-4) Those that preach the Gospel outside of this order are outside of God's Authority.

An example of this can be found in Acts 18:24-19:7. In this account we find an eloquent, well-meaning preacher of God's Word named Apollos. He was confident and skillful in his understanding of the Scriptures and no doubt many were saved as a result of his preaching. However, that wasn't satisfactory to God. He was approached by Priscilla and Aquila, members of the Church at Corinth, (see Acts 18:1-11,27) who showed him "the Way of God more perfectly".

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c/o 4028 Camellia Street
Springfield, Oregon 97478

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- Published by:
- Albany Missionary Baptist Church, Albany, OR
www.albanymissionarybaptist.org
 - Bethel Missionary Baptist Church, Creswell, OR
www.creswellmbchurch.com
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Take a moment and think about that phrase. Apollos knew the way of the Lord as he was no doubt taught by John the Baptist. John taught repentance and faith and then baptized after seeing “fruits meet for repentance”. (see Matthew 3:1-9) Apollos was also preaching repentance and then baptizing the requisitely qualified candidates, but he was not educated on the local, New Testament Church that Jesus had built. Priscilla and Aquila recognized this ignorance and expounded unto him God’s Way. (see Acts 9:1-1; 24:14) They didn’t pat Apollos on the back or condone his work. Rather, in love they were willing to show a seemingly “spiritual” man where he was falling short when it came to serving the Lord within God’s authority! It is worth noting that Apollos’ attitude when being corrected is something that we should all strive for when being confronted with our own shortfalls and ignorance in God’s Word. Apollos wasn’t just enlightened on how to serve God acceptably, he was sent and willingly went to Achaia, where the church at Corinth was.

Once Apollos left off for Corinth, we see Paul came back through Ephesus, where Apollos had been preaching and he found “certain disciples”. Paul baptized them after questioning them about what they knew concerning the Holy Spirit and confirming that they had been unscripturally baptized by Apollos. In ignorance, Apollos was “copying” what he thought John had been doing decades earlier except without the authority to do so! These Ephesians had the Spirit indwelling them as they were saved (see Ephesians 1:12-14 and John 14:17, “for He dwelleth with you”), but they hadn’t been organized into a church with the Holy Spirit as Comforter (see John 14:16-17,25-26; 15:26; 16:12-15; John 20:22-23, and Acts 2:1-4). They didn’t have Heaven’s Authority to operate as a Scriptural Church.

On the surface this seems narrow minded and legalistic. Afterall, Apollos was doing a great work for the Lord and no doubt some of these “disciples” that Paul found were also preaching the Gospel. But we must consider what God thinks at all times. If what they were doing was acceptable to God they would’ve been encouraged by Aquila, Priscilla, and Paul and left to themselves to keep doing what they were already doing. Thankfully, all parties involved surrendered to God’s will and the brethren in Ephesus were organized into a local, New Testament Church. This is the same church the Holy Spirit through Paul and John wrote to in Ephesians and Revelation. Apollos joined the church at Corinth and became a great worker for the Lord. (see Acts 19:1 and 1 Corinthians 1:12; 3:4-6)

“And many that believed came, and confessed, and shewed their deeds. Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all men: and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver. So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed. And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul: So that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them. Then certain of the vagabond Jews, exorcists, took upon them to call over them which had evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth. And there were seven sons of one Sceva, a Jew, and chief of the priests, which did so. And the evil spirit answered and said, Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye? And the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, and overcame them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded. And this was known to all the Jews

and Greeks also dwelling at Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified.” Acts 19:11-20

This passage serves as a great reminder that God’s authority isn’t simply picked up by individuals to use as they please. God’s executive authority has been delegated to one specific kind of people; a people whom God has sent. We see an attempt by some foolhardy Jews to highjack God’s miraculous Spiritual gift of casting out demons. The Bible is very clear that these Spiritual gifts were only given to the local, New Testament church.

Mark 16:15-20 gives us another piece to the account of the Great Commission referenced above. In this passage we see that Christ Himself declared that His church at Jerusalem would receive special “signs” and that these signs would serve the sole purpose of confirming the Word that they were commanded to preach. In 1 Corinthians 12:28-31, God reaffirms to us that these gifts along with the offices within the early church were set by God Himself and God alone. These Spiritual gifts weren’t for sale (see Acts 8:8-24) or for individual use as needed to heal sickness or make life easier. They were solely given to the Lord’s New Testament churches to confirm that what they were preaching was the Truth! Those that tried to use the gifts for personal gain in this passage suffered.

Today, we may not have these miraculous gifts of healing, speaking in tongues, or prophesying, but the principle remains: God didn’t send random individuals into this world to do His work. He didn’t send those that just pick up a Bible and start preaching from it. He sent the Institution that He started on the seashores of Galilee (see Isaiah 9:1-2; Matthew 4:12-19) during His personal ministry. This institution is His local, New Testament church and every Scriptural church that has descended from her down through the ages teaching and practicing His doctrines.

“I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which Thou hast given Me; for they are Thine. And all Mine are Thine, and Thine are Mine; and I am glorified in Them... Sanctify Them through Thy Truth: Thy Word is Truth. As Thou hast sent Me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also might be sanctified through the Truth. Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word; That they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us: that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me.” (John 17:8-9,17-21)

In Jesus’ final hours before His brutal death, He prayed not for this world, but for His beloved church, His espoused bride. It cannot be overstated that the local church is the most precious thing to Christ on this earth.

“Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.” Acts 20:28

It is to her that He has entrusted the privilege of spreading the Gospel throughout all the world during this age. It is to her that He has given the “mysteries” of the kingdom and His manifold wisdom (see Luke 8:10, 1 Corinthians 4:1, Ephesians 3:1-11). Lastly, it is to her that He promised He would prepare a special place for in that New Heaven and New Earth.

“Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.” John 14:1-3

“And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first

heaven and first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.” Revelation 21:1-4

However, we must remember that **ALL** power and authority are Christ’s. (see Matthew 28:18) Jesus is the Judge, the Jury and the Executioner. He is the “Heir of all things”. (see Hebrews 1:1-2) Although Jesus’ love for His bride is deeper than we can even begin to imagine, He has not given her a license to do whatever she wants.

In this country we enjoy a robust, durable type of federal government with separation of powers into three major branches: Executive, Legislative and Judicial. This system has stood the test of time because it is based upon Biblical principle. When we look at Christ and His church through this lens in the Scriptures, we can clearly see that Christ has legislated what His local churches are to do and how they are to do it. We see that Christ is the final Judge of all things.

“How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him. And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree: Him God raised up the third day, and shewed him openly; Not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead. And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead.” Acts 10:38-42

“Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.” Acts 17:31

That leaves His churches with the duty of simply executing what He has already ordained. His churches are not to go outside of the parameters given in the New Testament. This means, for instance, they are to carry out His ordinances (Baptism and the Lord’s Supper) precisely as He has delivered them. The Church at Corinth was admonished in 1 Corinthians 11:2 to “keep the ordinances, as I (Paul through the leadership of the Holy Spirit) delivered them to you”.

In fact, the whole eleventh chapter serves as a great reminder of what happens when the Lord’s Churches fail to execute the ordinances God’s way. In this case there were members at Corinth that were literally dying as a result of perverting the Lord’s Supper, turning it into a dinner party and completely disregarding its purpose. Corinth found out the hard way that although they had been authorized to practice this wonderful ordinance, if they weren’t going to observe it the right way, God would deal out serious consequences.

In closing let us remember these three things: God takes authority very seriously, He has authorized only His local, New Testament churches to carry out His will on this earth, and lastly this authorization is purely executive in nature.

Biblical Doctrine of Church Authority in Scriptural Baptism

“For the Son of man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch. Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cock-crowing, or in the morning: Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch.” Mark 13:34-37

Christ gave authority to the church. This word authority comes from the Greek word *exousia* meaning power, authority. This authority was the authority of Christ transferred or passed to His church. He gave the right to the church to exercise His power. We would refer to this as an executive body. One that executes and carries out the laws, commands, etc. of the authority, which is Jesus. The Lord’s churches are not legislative bodies. They are not to form, create, or develop the laws, guidelines, or practices.

“The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed. For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it.” Matthew 8:8-9

The Centurion was “under”, by, under the agency, or means) authority (*exousia*) but he also “practiced” or executed this authority.

“And he arose and went: and, behold, a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship,” Acts 8:27

An officer of great power “under” the queen, in charge of her treasure. This man had the authority to execute the queen’s treasure but only under her rules, not as he pleased.

“And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” Matthew 16:19

The keys of the kingdom, the authority, the permission, the right, and the allowance for the church to exercise, execute, and carry out the commands, laws, and standards of the kingdom. These have already been established. A church can use the authority Christ gave her, within the boundaries He set for her.

For example, a police officer can enforce the laws but he is not authorized to make new ones. A McDonald’s restaurant is owned by an individual,

but in order to use the name of the franchise, they have laws concerning how a McDonald must be made. They are not authorized to make changes to the menu because they are working under the authority of the McDonald’s franchise’s name. They must execute the menu according to the authority of the McDonald’s franchise if they are to continue to use the name.

“And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.” Matthew 28:18-20

A church only has the right, or permission to exercise or execute the commands, teachings, practices, and laws that she was given by Christ. She is only authorized to practice the things given and commanded by Christ Himself.

“Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.” Jude 3

“And so were the churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily.” Acts 16:5

“The faith” is the system of doctrines, teachings, and practices delivered to the saints by Jesus. The Lord’s local, New Testament churches have been specifically authorized to carry out the commands, practices, and teachings Christ had personally commanded and shown to the first church He established. Judging by the “Acts” of the apostles and the early churches, we know that the “ordination” of men was one of these practices. Otherwise, the apostles, personally taught by Jesus, would not have practiced this, nor commanded it to be practiced. (Titus 1:5; II Timothy 2:2, Acts 14:23)

I Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 2:5-9, the Scriptures clearly identify the qualifications for a man to meet in order to be a candidate for ordination to the office of bishop or pastor. If a man meets these, a church has the authority to execute the doctrine and practice of Biblical ordination as laid out, taught, and practiced in the Scriptures by Christ and the apostles.

“Lay hands suddenly on no man, neither be partaker of other men’s sins: keep thyself pure.” I Timothy 5:22

A church is to be admonished in this Scripture not to take the execution of this doctrine lightly. A church doesn’t have the authority to legislate the laws, rules,

or qualifications regarding ordination. A church cannot ordain any man, or sadly today a woman, they choose and still be in accordance with the Scriptures. They must only ordain a man that meets the qualifications, rules, and laws that Christ has laid out in the Scriptures.

Every example of an administrator for baptism in the Bible was an ordained man. John the Baptist was a man ordained and directly sent by God and authorized with Heaven’s authority. John declares he was sent by Jesus, God, to baptize.

“Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts.” Malachi 3:1

“The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.” Isaiah 40:3

“There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. And this is the record of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who art thou? And he confessed, and denied not; but confessed, I am not the Christ. And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elias? And he saith, I am not. Art thou that prophet? And he answered, No. Then said they unto him, Who art thou? that we may give an answer to them that sent us. What sayest thou of thyself? He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias. And they which were sent were of the Pharisees. And they asked him, and said unto him, Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet? John answered them, saying, I baptize with water: but there standeth one among you, whom ye know not; He it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe’s latchet I am not worthy to unloose. These things were done in Bethabara beyond Jordan, where John was baptizing. And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost.” John 1:6, 19-28, 33

The apostles baptized.

“After these things came Jesus and his disciples into the land of Judaea; and there he tarried with them, and baptized.” John 3:22

“When therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John, (Though Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples,)” John 4:1-2

They were ordained personally by Jesus and placed in the church.

“And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease. Now the names of the

twelve apostles are these; The first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother; Philip, and Bartholomew; Thomas, and Matthew the publican; James the son of Alphaeus, and Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus; Simon the Canaanite, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed him. These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Matthew 10:1-6

"And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues." I Corinthians 12:28

"And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;" Ephesians 4:11

Even Paul, an apostle "born out of due season" stated he was ordained and that he had been appointed to this office. Paul was most likely ordained by the Antioch church that sent him out under the authority of Christ to do mission work by preaching, baptizing and organizing churches.

"Whereunto I am ordained a preacher, and an apostle, (I speak the truth in Christ, and lie not;) a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and verity." I Timothy 2:7

"Whereunto I am appointed a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles." II Timothy 1:11

"As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them." Acts 13:2

"For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." II Timothy 1:12

Philip baptized. We first hear of him as a deacon in Jerusalem, however, he was later called by God to be a preacher and ordained by Jerusalem as an evangelist. After baptizing the Ethiopian Eunuch, he settled in Caesarea. Paul and the brethren stopped at his house and Paul refers to him as "the evangelist".

"But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. Then Simon himself believed also: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done. And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing. But Philip was found at Azotus: and passing through he preached in all the cities, till he came to Caesarea." Acts 8:12-13, 38-40

"And the next day we that were of Paul's company departed, and came unto Caesarea: and we entered into the house of Philip the evangelist, which was one of the seven; and abode with him." Acts 21:8

The word "of" is the Greek word *ek*, which means called out from, denoting origin. This means that Philip, who was a deacon, was called out from that position to be an evangelist, a God-called, ordained preacher.

"But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry." II Timothy 4:5

An evangelist was a God-called, ordained office put within a New Testament church by Christ. The office of evangelist was given to the early churches until the Bible was completed but they served in the position of an ordained preacher being used to preach, baptize and edify the Lord's churches as previously seen in Ephesians 4:11 before the written Word of God was completed. After the written Word of God was completed, these special gifts were done away because the Word of God could now "thoroughly" furnish a man of God to every good work.

The authority of Christ given to His New Testament churches only allows those churches to operate under His authority, not their own. The Lord gave the commission to His church to exercise baptism only as He commanded. Every example given in the Scriptures is a God-called preacher ordained through a local, New Testament church, except John the Baptist who was directly ordained by God. These men were ordained apostles, bishops, evangelist who met the qualifications for these offices laid out clearly in the Scriptures.

Today, the Lord's churches are only authorized to use an ordained preacher who meets the qualifications of the Scriptures to administer baptism. A church does not have the "exousia", authority, to ordain or appoint anyone, man or woman, whom they choose to baptize. In adherence to the New Testament law, which was already established and legislated by Christ, a church's "authority" is to execute these in submission and obedience to Christ. In doing so, she will be blessed and favored by the Lord and He promises to "be with you always" if the church stays within the regulations given by God. If a church is without a pastor, they can use a Scripturally ordained man from a church of like-faith and order to administer the baptism. The authority of Christ comes through the church but they must only use the administrator that meets the qualifications of the Scriptures.

To go outside of these examples, teachings, and commands is to be outside of Christ's authority. Without His authority, any actions taken are **unauthorized** and therefore, **unlawful**. Baptism executed outside of Christ's authority is therefore unscriptural. For a church to use an unscriptural administrator is to go outside of Christ's authority. Every example given in the New Testament is clear that a Scriptural administrator must be one that meets those laid out by Christ.

"And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully." II Timothy 2:5

Calvinism Debunked

The Calvinist teaching on predestination is one of the most damnable heresies ever to be taught. It makes foolish the preaching of the gospel, witnessing to the lost, and leaves little purpose for the empowering of the church on the day of Pentecost. (Acts 1:8) Who are "the called", "the chosen", "the predestined", and "the elect"? These terms are used exclusively to those who are already in Christ. If these terms were in reference to God choosing people to soul salvation, then it would make no sense for God to tell us to make our calling and election sure.

Romans 1:1-8 and 8:28—"The called" is surely the New Testament church of Rome. In verse 5, "the faith" identifies the system of doctrines given to the apostles in the church. In verses 6-7, "the called" is referring to church members being set aside for service. I Corinthians 1:1-2, 9-10 directly tells us church members are called to be saints and they are called into the fellowship of the local church and united by the Word of God.

Ephesians 1:13-23 and 4:1-5 sets forth to help us understand the hope of our calling. Verse 18 in Ephesians 1 shows us that the hope of our calling is our inheritance with the saints, the church. We are also told in these verses to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called that we might inspire unity in the body of Christ which is the church.

In Philippians 3:14-4:1, Paul by the inspiration of the Spirit calls this calling a high calling of God. In II Thessalonians 1:10-12, Bro. Paul prays that the church of Thessalonica would be counted worthy of that calling.

Ephesians 1:3-4 says that the chosen are already in Christ. II Timothy 2:1-5 tells the chosen to be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. These are chosen not to soul salvation, but to service. I Peter 2:9-12 makes it clear that the chosen had already been called out of darkness into His marvelous light. They were already saved and now chosen to do a service for the Lord.

Romans and Ephesians are the only references to predestination in the New Testament. In Romans 8:28-30 these specific individuals that were "predestinated" were already in Christ through salvation. These are the saints that were resurrected around Jerusalem at the time of Jesus' resurrection. He was the firstborn, first fruits, among many brethren. He predestinated these that were in Christ to be part of the first fruits to receive their glorified bodies at His resurrection.

In Ephesians 1:4-23, these are only predestinated in Christ. Because they are in Christ, they are predestinated to be children of God but then His will is that we have a full inheritance by coming to the knowledge of the truth in one of His New Testament churches. This is also referencing the Gentiles being grafted in as saints in the Lord's church and not just the Jews. (Isaiah 49:6-8; Isaiah 42:5-9; Isaiah 55:3-5; Malachi 1:11)

Colossians 3:12 calls the church at Colosse the elect of God. (Colossians 1:1-2) I Thessalonians 1:1-4 makes it clear the election is in service, not salvation. In Old Testament times the saints were the faithful who served God under that covenant. Today, the saints, chosen, or elect are those that serve God faithfully under the New Testament law in a local, New Testament church.

"Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen. I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called." Ephesians 3:20-4:1

"Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints." Jude 3