

# EXERCISING AUTHORITY

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Many associate the attainment of greater authority or power with the pitfalls of pride and arrogance. As a Christian who has risen to higher levels of authority in my career, I often think about those who seem to take pride in their position and wonder if I'll succumb to those temptations. But those who understand authority also have an opportunity to demonstrate great faith through their belief in the authority of Christ.

## **The Roman centurion's faith**

Remember the centurion who besought Christ to heal his servant (Matt 8:5)? Jesus offered to come heal him but the centurion replied, "*Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest 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*" (Matt 8:8-9). This man understood authority being in a position of power and he believed the great authority and power of Jesus, and showed his faith. In fact, Jesus turned and testified, "*Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel*" (Matt 8:10), and then healed the centurion's servant from afar. I'm sure there were those who wondered how this centurion's faith was greater than theirs, but this man had great faith and a good understanding of authority.

## **The Ethiopian eunuch**

When Philip was divinely directed to the Ethiopian Eunuch, notice how the text describes the eunuch as "*a man of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure...*" (Acts 8:27). Phillip preached "*Jesus,*" and when they came to water, the eunuch asked what hindered him from being baptized. Phillip replied, "*If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest,*" and the eunuch responded, "*I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God*" (Acts 8:36-37). The eunuch understood authority, believed who Jesus is, and recognized the need to submit

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(continued)

To the authority of the Son of God.

## **Christ's use of authority**

Jesus of course had great authority (Mark 4:41, Luke 10:19), and understood it. He was sent to the earth by the Father's authority (John 3:17, 13:16), and recognized and honored it (John 10:29, 14:28). He also saw the principles behind secular authority but called us to distinguish ourselves from that pattern through faith, "*Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them. But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister: And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all. For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many*" (Mark 10:42-45). Having come from the Father, and obviously knowing and believing in His authority, Jesus stated, "*My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work*" (John 4:34). And of course we know He did just that. (John 19:30).

## **Submitting to Christ's authority**

Jesus declared that "*All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth*" (Matt 28:18). Regardless of our position, we can understand that we are to submit ourselves to the authority of Christ by doing what He says –just like the centurion's soldiers understood what it meant to be under the centurion. Jesus questions those who claim to be under His authority but refused to submit, "*And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?*" ( Luke 6:46). But if we have earthly authority, we have a greater responsibility to understand what it means to be under Christ's authority. Let's be as servants, doing the will of the Father, and following in our Master's steps. And pray that any earthly authority we may obtain, become not a stumbling block, but a reminder of the authority we are all under.