

GOVERNMENT, LEADERSHIP &
DECISION MAKING IN THE *ECCLESIA*
OF JESUS CHRIST

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DEFINITIONS

Government

Jesus has ALL AUTHORITY both in heaven and on earth (Matt.28:18). Jesus is the **undisputed Head**, the ONE AND ONLY GOVERNMENT of the church, His BODY. There is **no other government** in the church apart from Jesus.

Leadership

To lead is not to govern. To be a leader is to LEAD OUT, to INITIATE, to be the FIRST to obey. Jesus was the first to obey the Father in ALL THINGS. There is nothing that we do in leading out that Jesus has not already done.

How does Jesus LEAD the church?

- Like a shepherd, i.e. by example and word. NOT as the Gentile Rulers Matt.20:25-28).
- Speaking by the Spirit through the members of His body.

How does the church discern Jesus' leadership?

- By giving Him the opportunity to speak through its members, I Cor.14:29.

To experience Jesus in this way requires close living, (I John 1:1ff). The church is not a casual occupation. It is a family with definite structure (real, lasting and on-going relationships) where the Headship of Jesus is recognised and His leadership discerned and followed.

PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

Wrestling

It is a wonderful thing to be in the family of God! WHY THEN DO WE FIND PEOPLE OF GOD NOT ALWAYS ENJOYING IT?! It is a grief to hear of the family fighting amongst themselves.

On the other hand, it is **not** a grief to hear that the church is WRESTLING THROUGH THE ISSUES, providing it is done with GRACE and TRUTH. We need to learn to wrestle in a way that ensures that:

- The body is built up/not divided.
- The purposes of God are clearly seen.

Which Vessels?

The leading of the Spirit is discerned through human vessels. Which vessels does He use? The scripture is plain: The Lord is not a respecter of persons. He chooses (He is Lord) any vessel that is available (Jer.31:31-34. Rom.12:3, I Cor.12:1-31, Eph.4:7).

Proving the Word

Everything spoken must be 'proved', to see whether it be of God. **The vessels are imperfect** so we must test everything. NB: The purpose of this is not to check up on the speaker but to check out the word.

Accepting One Another

If we are not going to live in isolation, we must be prepared to put up with each other. Some people tend to

rub our flesh the wrong way or cut across our natural thinking; not on purpose but because they are DIFFERENT from us. NB: The Lord does not put different people together to create conflicts. He does it so that we have the opportunity to hear the WHOLE STORY. A corporate community given to hearing from heaven is an exciting place to be. As we bring corporate understanding to bear on what the Spirit is saying, we see **things that are never seen by people in isolation.**

We are under no obligation to a word brought in the flesh but in refusing the word we need to be careful to show that **we do not refuse the speaker.**

Seeing Together

We cannot go forward until **everybody** sees that the word is from heaven. When we are not in unity, we must not give up on one another by acting independently. We must wait and wrestle until unity is achieved.

When one person in the body does not see something, there is a strong chance that WE HAVE ALL NOT SEEN it perfectly. If we wrestle it through until the last person is satisfied, we will all come to a better place. Do not be in a hurry. **Jesus allows the time for all to see it.**

It is dangerous to sweep unresolved issues under the carpet. This is a pretense at unity; a **scab syndrome**. If we do not agree, let's say so **and wait** for more light from heaven.

United Action

NB: United action fulfills the mystery of the will of God, (Eph.1:9-10). The order for UNITY is:

- We see it together in the spirit;
- We think it together in our hearts and minds;
- We do it together in a glorious release of obedient action.

FUNCTIONAL GIFTING

So far we have been dealing with practical matters relating to:

- Prophetic utterance (Acts 2:17-18, etc.)
- Obedient action.

These two activities combined speak of faith. The obedience response may require **corporate action**; e.g. "Praise Me!" On the other hand, obedient action might require that **certain people** perform a task on behalf of the community, e.g. Acts 6:1-8. In choosing people for tasks, we reference the Lord for HIS CHOICE. Acts 6 gives some guidelines as to how this should be done.

- The choice should be made by the **whole church**.
- The church should look for people amongst themselves who are known to be honest, faithful, wise and filled with the Holy Spirit.
- Those chosen should be brought before the whole assembly for the laying on of hands and prayer.

DIVERSITY

The emphasis of scripture is that every member is gifted to perform an important and vital function within the body. **But** all do not have the same OUTWORKING. We are a diverse people... and that is the way the Lord intended us to be, (I Cor.12:1-31, Rom.12:4b).

It is important to accept diversity, both in ourselves and in our brethren. We are not planned to be the same, we are planned to be complementary and complete in unity. **To appreciate diversity is to enter into a rich experience of community and sensible ordering of our corporate life.**

MATURITY

While we are all gifted for service within the principle of diversity, not all are equal in maturity and experience. In all communities we find '**fathers, young men and children**', (I John 2:12-14).

Maturity is an important goal for believers, much of the gifting of Christ is directed towards that end, (Eph.4:11-13).

Paul defines maturity as (Eph.4:14-16):

- Being secure in your discernment.
- Knowing how to speak the truth in love.
- Being bonded into the body.
- Doing your job with a glad heart and releasing others to do the same.
- Participating in the increase of the body, its building up in love.

These points are expanded in the rest of the same chapter (Eph.4:17-32):

Put-Off

Conversation which is corrupt in lust
Lying
Anger and broken relationships
Stealing
Criticism, murmuring, bitterness, wrath,
clamor, evil speaking, malice

Put On

A renewed mind
Speak the truth
Be reconciled
Work and give to the needs of others
Speech which edifies, tender heartedness,
forgiveness

If we concentrate on doing these things we will do well - getting on with living and being a blessing to those around us.

Ephesians 6 ends with a unified community entering into spiritual warfare and prayer for a voice of utterance into the cosmos and the affairs of men. These are the objectives in the mind of the Spirit when He calls us to a common life in Jesus. Let's press through so that it may be said of us (corporately) that the gates of hell could not prevail against us.

NB: Life in the assembly (*ecclesia*) is **not only for the mature!** Ephesians 5/6 list various contributions from all section of the community; see Appendix (below) for an expanded view of these things.

SOLVING DISPUTES

The dispute at Jerusalem over circumcision (Acts 15) is an excellent guide in this important area. Some Judaeans brethren came to Antioch teaching that circumcision is essential for salvation. Paul and Barnabas would have none of it and there developed "no small dissension and argument"! Does this sound familiar?! The dispute was resolved as follows:

- Paul and Barnabas were appointed by the church at Antioch to go to Jerusalem to inquire of the apostles and elders about this question.
- When they arrived in Jerusalem, they were received by the Jerusalem church (ecclesia).
- The Pharisees put their case to the church, and Paul and Barnabas put theirs.
- The apostles and elders came together to consider the matter. (NB: Not to make a decision).

- After much disputing, Peter spoke to the whole church, who, after they had heard him were silent.
- Paul and Barnabas were given opportunity to 'declare the wonderful works of God amongst the Gentiles'.
- James summed up the discussion with scriptural support.
- Certain brethren were appointed to carry a letter on behalf of the whole church to Antioch with the decision made when the Jerusalem church was assembled in one place in one accord.

THE RIGHT ATTITUDE

The solving of disputes in the manner prescribed above requires that the saints maintain the right attitude.

"For I say, through the grace given to me, to every man that is amongst you, not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think (balance): but to think soberly, according as God has dealt to every man the measure of faith, (Rom.12:3).

"Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem the others better than themselves", (Phil.2:3).

"He has shown you, O man, what is good: and what does the Lord require of you. but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?"

SUMMARY

The end of the Law is this: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all your heart, mind and strength and thy neighbour as thyself". The battle is in the emotions and the mind. The devil tries to push us into:

- Thinking we know a lot when in actuality we know very little.
- Ruling over others. Usurping the authority of Jesus.

When we hear from heaven it is by grace: *charismata*. On the other hand, God's choice of a vessel has to do with openness. **Let's all be open and all be free to release all of God's gifting to His body.** Part of this is ensuring that the children and the young men are **included** in the decision making process as much as possible. How else will they learn? Besides, **sometimes the best words come through the innocent** rather than through the 'mature' speaking out of 'experience'. "Except you be as little children, you will in no way enter into the Kingdom of God"