

## Using God's Given Authority

**Within the Pillars of Wisdom**

**Mark Schindler**

**Given 30-Nov-19; Sermon #1518**

On March 30, 1981, just a little over two months after Ronald Reagan became the fortieth president of the United States, there was an attempted assassination on the newly inaugurated president. Many have said that it had actually played a crucial role in defining the Reagan presidency. At the time the American people were not aware of the severity of the attack and how close the president of the United States came to death within the ensuing hours.

But Reagan's "John Wayne type swagger" from the presidential limousine into the hospital emergency room, before he collapsed into the arms of the medical staff, and his reported quips brought a sense of order in a chaotic situation.

In its weekly edition two weeks after the assassination attempt, *Time* magazine reported, "When President Reagan was shot on this day, March 30 in 1981, it was anything but funny. The assassination attempt by John W. Hinkley Jr. required the president to undergo surgery and seriously wounded three others."

Reagan knew it was important to convey to the country that he was going to be okay. Before he was told the others had been injured, he knew that humor could get the message across perhaps better than any other of the official reassurance.

According to *Time's* coverage of the assassination attempt, the very first thing he said to the First Lady when she walked into the room was, "Honey, I forgot to duck." a reference to one line by Dr. Jack Dempsey. The magazine compiled this list of the best reactions to the shooting and his own injuries from President Reagan.

To the surgeons when he entered the operating room he said, “Please tell me you’re all Republicans.” In a written note upon coming out of anesthesia in the recovery room, paraphrasing W. C. Fields, he wrote, “All in all I would rather be in Philadelphia.” In another note recalling a Winston Churchill observation, he wrote, “There’s no more exhilarating feeling than being shot at without results.” In a third note he wrote, “Send me to L.A. where I can see the air I am breathing.” Yet another note written while surrounded by the medical staff, he wrote, “If I had this much attention in Hollywood I would have stayed there.”

Complimented by the doctors later on being a good patient he said, “I have to be, my father-in-law’s a doctor.” To an attentive nurse he said, “Does Nancy know about us?” and to a nurse that told him to keep up the good work of his recovery, he said, “You mean this may happen several times?” To daughter Maureen he said, “The attempted assassination ruined one of my best suits.”

Greeting the White House aides, the morning after his surgery, he said, “Hi fellas! It would be too much to hope we could skip the morning meeting.” Finally, when told by the aide Lyn Nofziger that the government was running normally, his remark was, “What makes you think that I would be happy about that?”

*Time* was not the Reagan’s only admirer on the humor front, that year’s Oscars took place the next day. Host Johnny Carson joked that he wanted to call the president to punch up the script. The situation also very probably changed President Reagan’s approach to his presidency—the time he had been given and authority by God to lead.

President Reagan had never kept a daily diary before his presidency, which he later said he would regret because life goes by so swiftly. However, when he became president, he determined to follow the example of four other presidents, including George Washington and John Quincy Adams, and maintain a daily record of his thoughts.

In the days following the assassination attempt he wrote the following from March 30, 1981:

My day to address the Building and Construction Trades National Conference (AFCIO) at the Hilton ballroom 2.00 pm. Was all dressed to go and for some reason at the last minute took off my good wristwatch and wore an older one. Speech not widely received, still it was successful. Left the hotel at the usual side entrance, headed for the car, suddenly there was disperse of gun fire from the left. Secret Service agent pushed me on to the floor of the car and jumped on top. I felt a blow in my upper back. It was unbelievably painful, I was sure he had broken my rib. The car took off, I sat up on the edge of the seat almost paralyzed by pain. I began coughing up blood which made both of us think I had broken my rib and it had punctured a lung. He switched to orders from the White House to George Washington University hospital.

By the time we arrived I was having great trouble getting enough air, we did not know that the Secret Service agent, Tim McCarthy, had been shot in the chest, Jim Brady in the head, and a policeman Tom Delahanty in the neck. I walked into the emergency room where I was hoisted onto a cart while I was stripped of my clothes. It was then we learned that I had been shot and the bullet was lodged in my lung. Getting shot hurts! Still my fear was growing because no matter how hard I tried to breath it seemed I was getting less and less air. I focused on the tiled ceiling and prayed. When I realized I could not ask for God's help at the same time I felt hatred for the mixed-up young man who had shot me.

Is that not the meaning of lost sheep? We are all God's children, and therefore equally beloved by Him. I began to pray for his soul and that he would find his way back to the fold. I opened my eyes once to find Nancy there. I pray I never face a day when she is not there. Of all the ways God has blessed me giving her to me is the greatest and beyond anything I can ever hope to deserve.

All the kids arrived, and the hours ran together in a blur during which I was operated on. I know it is going to be a long recovery but there has been such an outpouring of love from all over.

Then in this entry from April 11, the president wrote, "The days of therapy, transfusion, intravenous etc. has gone by. Now it is April 11, and this morning I left the hospital. I am here at the White House with Nancy and Patty. The treatment, the warmth, the skill of those at George Washington had been magnificent, but it great to be here at home." Then he wrote, "Whatever happens now, I owe my life to God, and I will try to serve Him every way I can."

President Reagan knew any authority he had been given to lead was a gift to him, to serve in whatever he could with wisdom. I can tell you from an eyewitness account that this was the course of the remainder of his presidency. You see, Tim McCarthy, the Secret Service agent who took the bullet for the president, is a relative of my wife Nancy, on her side of the family. and Tim watched this man faithfully exercise his God-given authority and service, in every way he could over the next seven plus years.

I only see Tim frequently at family events, he is Nancy's brother's closest friend and has been reported to me that Tim has said, "Being with the Reagan's was like being with your favorite grandparents, a firm figure of authority, but with wisdom of their years that produced what was best for all of those around them."

I began this sermon with this era in American history because I wanted to make a point about God-given authority and the correct and incorrect use of it based on wisdom. This is especially important to us today as we are living in a world these days when the use of power with any kind of wisdom from above is highly evident from anyone in government authority.

Before going any further, I would like to make sure that you understand I am not trying to hold President Reagan and his presidency up to the same standard and use of wisdom as God expects from us, whose citizenship is in the Kingdom of God now. But there is a process for God granting some portion of godly wisdom from above to those leaders in the past that He has used to fulfill His will.

**Daniel 4:28-37** All this came upon the King Nebuchadnezzar. At the end of the twelve months, he was walking about the royal palace of Babylon. The king spoke, saying, "Is not this great

Babylon, that I have built for a royal dwelling by my mighty power and for the honor of my majesty?" While the word was still in the king's mouth, a voice fell from heaven: "King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is spoken: the kingdom has departed from you! And they shall drive you from men, and your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field. They shall make you eat grass like oxen; and seven times shall pass over you, until you know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomever He chooses." That very hour the word was fulfilled concerning Nebuchadnezzar; he was driven from men and ate grass like oxen; his body was wet with dew of heaven till his hair had grown like eagles' feathers and his nails like birds' claws.

And at the end of the time I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my understanding returned to me; and I blessed the Most High and praised and honored Him who lives forever: For His dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His Kingdom is from generation to generation. All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; He does according to His will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth. No one can restrain His hand or say to Him, "What have You done?" At the same time my reason returned to me, and for the glory of my kingdom, my honor and splendor returned to me. My counselors and nobles reported to me, I was restored to my kingdom, and excellent majesty was added to me. Now, I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, all of whose works are truth, and His ways justice. And those who walk in pride He is able to put down.

Obviously, Nebuchadnezzar was not a king of Israel, but God had given him certain gifts and he came to recognize the King of heaven in a similar way to President Reagan.

We will be weaving together the vital importance of completing our work within the body of Christ using the God-given authority that includes the gifts God has given each one of us for service to the whole body, within the wisdom from above.

**John 17:1-8** [Jesus' prayer to His Father the night before He is willingly completed a vital part of His work in suffering and dying for us] Jesus spoke these words, lifted up His eyes to heaven and said, "Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You, as You have given Him authority over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him. And this is eternal life, that that may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do. And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was. I have manifested Your name to the men whom You have given Me out of the world. They were Yours, you gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word. Now they have known that all things which You have given Me are from You. For I have given to them the words which You have given Me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came forth from You; and they have believed that You sent Me."

Jesus tells us here that He had been given the authority over all flesh, and that He had finished the work He had been given in such a way that brought glory to the Father. He had carefully used His authority in a way that clearly manifested the Father to those under His authority.

**John 17:1-4** (AMPC) When Jesus had spoken these things, He lifted up His eyes to heaven and said, Father the hour has come. Glorify it and exalt and honor and magnify Your Son, so that Your Son may glorify and extol and honor and magnify You. ]Just as] You have granted Him power and authority over all flesh (all humankind), [now glorify Him] so that He may give eternal life to all whom You have given Him. I have glorified You [down here] on earth by completing the work that You gave Me to do.

Jesus Christ completed His part of the work He had been given the authority to do as a man, using the same things He expects us to use with authority, power, and gifts He has delegated to us. He expects us to seek and use the same wisdom that was with Him from the beginning.

**Proverbs 8:1-36** Does not wisdom cry out, and understanding lift her voice? She takes her stand on the top of the high hill, beside the way, where the paths meet. She cries out by the gates, at the entry of the city, at the entrance of the doors: “To you, O men, I call, and my voice is to the sons of men. O you simple ones, understand prudence, and you fools, be of an understanding heart. Listen, for I will speak of excellent things, and from the opening of my lips will come right things; for my mouth will speak truth; wickedness is an abomination to my lips. All the words of my mouth are with righteousness; nothing crooked or perverse is in them. They are all plain to him who understands, and right to those who find knowledge.

Receive my instruction, and not silver, and knowledge rather than choice gold; for wisdom is better than rubies, and all the things one may desire cannot be compared with her. “I, wisdom, dwell with prudence, and find out knowledge and discretion. The fear of the Lord is to hate evil; pride and arrogance and the evil way and the perverse mouth I hate. Counsel is mine, and sound wisdom; I am understanding, I have strength. By me kings reign, and rulers decree justice. By me princes rule, and nobles, all the judges of the earth. I love those who love me, and those who seek me diligently will find me. Riches and honor are with me, enduring riches and righteousness. My fruit is better than gold, yes, than fine gold, and my revenue than choice silver. I traverse the way of righteousness, in the midst of the paths of justice, that I may cause those who love me to inherit wealth, that I may fill their treasuries.

The Lord possessed me at the beginning of His way, before His works of old. I have been established from everlasting, from the beginning, before there was ever an earth. When there were no depths, I was brought forth, when there were no fountains

abounding with water. Before the mountains were settled, before the hills, I was brought forth; while yet He had not made the earth or the fields, or the primal dust of the world. When He prepared the heavens, I was there, when He drew a circle on the face of the deep, when He established the clouds above, when He strengthened the fountains of the deep, when He assigned to the sea its limit, so that the waters would not transgress His command, when He marked out the foundations of the earth, then I was beside Him as a master craftsman; and I was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him, Rejoicing in His inhabited world, and my delight was with the sons of men.

Now therefore, listen to me, my children, for blessed are those who keep my ways. Hear instruction and be wise, and do not disdain it. Blessed is the man who listens to me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors. For whoever finds me finds life and obtains favor from the Lord; but he who sins against me wrongs his own soul; all those who hate me love death.”

Brethren, just as Jesus Christ was given all authority to complete His work perfectly, with the same wisdom that He had throughout His process of creation, He has delegated authority to each one of us in some measure to complete the work, our work within the body of Christ. He expects us to use godly wisdom from Him, through His Holy Spirit to administer the authority He has given to complete our work, for the glory of the Father and the unity of the body.

We have all been gifted by God in different ways to complete the work for His glory. We can only do it if we are using those gifts of power and authority with wisdom. Not the wisdom of men, but the wisdom from above, that very same wisdom with which God continues His perfect creation.

Turn to a scripture that clearly points to what I am trying to get across in this sermon today. Because there is a clear connection between the correct and careful use of our gifts with wisdom of the creator, and our ability to use our special gifts, power, and authority in accord with godly love. We all have some form of God given power, but if we do not use the wisdom from above, we will never achieve what the following verses tell us.

**I Corinthians 13:1-13** Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become as sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understanding all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing. Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up, does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails.

But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away. When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known. And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

John Ritenbaugh wrote in a 1998 *Forerunner* article, “The Fruit of the Spirit: Love”:

In I Corinthians 13, the Bible reveals love as supreme importance to life. God directly compares love's value to faith, hope, prophecies, sacrifice, knowledge, and gift of tongues. And indirectly all the other gifts of God mentioned in chapter 12. He in no way denigrates the others' usefulness to life in God's purpose. But none can compare with the importance of love.

The Corinthians took great pleasure in their gifts just as we would, but gift's relative importance is shown in the temporal quality, that

is, there are times when a gift is of no use, but love will never end, it will always be in use. Indeed, the receiving of gifts from God, unless accompanied by and used with love, have the potential to corrupt the one receiving them. God's gifts are powers given to enhance a person's ability to serve God in the church. However, we have heard the cliché "power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely." If gifts are not received and used with love, they will play a part in corrupting the recipient, just as they were corrupting the Corinthians.

Love is the attribute of God that enables us to receive and use His gifts without corruption.

The only way our gifts can be used appropriately is in the appropriate time to complete the work God expects from His people, and create the unified body of Christ, with His outgoing concern. The only way we can do this is if it is with wisdom, the same wisdom that the Creator used from the beginning.

That is why these two are so well tied together, wisdom and love. Brethren, just as these gifts, power, and authority used without God's love will corrupt, so too will God's gifts, power, and authority corrupt, if used without godly wisdom from above.

The authority we have been given will only produce what God desires for His glory if we recognize and use that authority under the governor of His wisdom that He has given, that has been with Him from before the foundation of the earth, before even the foundation was laid. Only then can we successfully finish the work that we have been given to do, just as our Elder Brother did. Just as I was given an eyewitness account of an imperfect leader who had successfully used his authority to lead under some of the wisdom from above, we have, more importantly, been given an eyewitness account of a perfect Leader, who has always used His authority perfectly, in the wisdom of outgoing concern has its source in the very mind and character of God.

So, we will turn to that eyewitness account. We will find it from Jesus Christ's half-brother James. When we go through the remainder of this sermon, please keep this thought in mind. Tim McCarthy had the opportunity for

eight years to watch someone lead who had pledged to use his authority to lead with godly wisdom, as far as Ronald Reagan understood it. But in the epistle of James, God has given us the opportunity to have an eyewitness account from someone who observed Immanuel, used His authority for thirty-three plus years, with the perfect wisdom as used from the foundation of the earth.

Please think on this, brethren. We have an eyewitness to the work of God as a man, from the time he was a boy. What James is telling us here is the perfect use of power and authority as he saw it exercised, so that we too can confidently follow his elder brother, just as he himself eventually did, upon reflection on a lifetime of watching Him work.

I want to make it clear again, that each one of us have been given authority in some form that must be used with godly wisdom, if it is to produce the good work God expects within the body of Christ, and not just to feed our own egos.

God is in the process of building character in His called-out ones, to learn His way of life, and a certain amount of powers given to each for this process. However, it must be done with wisdom of God and not of men that will only make our authority self-serving.

I recently received an email from someone, and under the person's signature was this quote from Abraham Lincoln, which is pretty much the underline point of this sermon today. Lincoln said, "Nearly all men can stand adversity, but if you want to test a man's character, give him power." How we use authority, power, and gifts which God has given us is part of the character-building process that God has giving to everyone, especially to those whom He has called now to be prepared to rule with Christ at His return.

It is not just a matter of using the obvious gifts we have been given but using them in a way that will produce the fruit of righteousness, and outgoing concern of love for God and the brethren. Are we using the authority, power, and gifts, we have been given to enhance our relationship with Jesus Christ, and the members of the body? Or are we serving ourselves?

In John 17:2, the word translated as authority in the *New King James Version*, is also translated as power in the *King James*. Number 1849 in the Strong's, *exousia* is an ability, privilege. In the *King James* it is recorded as authority, jurisdiction, liberty, power, right, strength. Jesus Christ had absolute and complete power. We too have been given a portion of this same power from God to do the work we have been given, in some small way, as part of the process of creating us in His very image and showing our love for Him and for the brethren.

**John 1:10-13** (AMPC) And He came into the world, and though the world was made through Him, the world did not recognize Him [did not know Him]. He came to that which belonged to Him [to His own—His domain, creation, things, world], and they who were His own did not receive Him and did not welcome Him. To as many as He did receive and welcome Him, He gave the authority (power, privilege, right) to become the children of God, that is, to those who believe in (adhere to, trust in, and rely) on His name. Who owe their birth neither to bloods nor to the will of the flesh [that of physical impulse] nor to the will of men [that of the natural father], but to God. [They are born of God!]

At this point I would like to take a couple of examples of God-given authority. Again, these are very familiar scriptures, but each of these are good reminders of the correct or incorrect use of authority, power, and gifts based on wisdom from God. Wisdom from another source.

**Matthew 8:5-13** Now when Jesus had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to Him, pleading with Him, saying, “Lord my servant is lying at home paralyzed, dreadfully tormented.” And Jesus said to him, “I will come and heal him.” The centurion answered and said, “Lord, I am not worthy that You should come under my roof. But only speak a word, and my servant will be healed. For I also am a man under authority, having soldiers under me. And I say to this one, ‘Go,’ and he goes and to another, ‘Come,’ and he comes; and to my servant, ‘Do this,’ and he does it.” When Jesus heard it, He marveled, and said to those who followed, “Assuredly, I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel! And I say to you that many will come from

east and west, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. But the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” Then Jesus said to the centurion, “Go your way, and as you have believed, so let it be done for you” And his servant was healed that same hour.

**Luke 7:1-7** Now when He concluded all His sayings in the hearing of the people, He entered Capernaum. And a certain centurion’s servant, who was dear to him, was sick and ready to die. So when he heard about Jesus, he sent elders of the Jews to Him, pleading with Him to come and heal his servant. And when they came to Jesus, they begged Him earnestly, saying that the one for whom He should do this was worthy, “for he loves our nation and had built us a synagogue.” Then Jesus went with them. And when He was already not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to Him, saying to Him, “Lord, do not trouble Yourself, for I am not worthy that You should enter under my roof. Therefore I did not even think myself worthy to come to You. But say the word, and my servant will be healed.”

These verses give some additional information, but the emphasis on the position are of one in authority giving authority to others as his representative. Here was an example of someone who understood the delegation of authority, and to a limited extent, as one not called at the time, but having faith in the power of God, perhaps in the same way as President Reagan did, who recognized the authority given to him by one of higher authority to do his job in service to others.

Turn to Acts 5, we will see the reality of the stakes for those involved now, called now to use the delegated authority they have with wisdom.

**Acts 5:1-11** But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession. And he kept back part of the proceeds, his wife also being aware of it, and brought a certain part and laid it at the apostles’ feet. But Peter said, “Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back part of the price of the land for yourself? While it remained, was it not your own?

And after it was sold, was it not in your own control? Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God.” Then Ananias, hearing these words, fell and breathed his last. So great fear came upon all those who heard these things. And the young men arose and wrapped him up, carried him out, and buried him. Now it was about three hours later when his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. And Peter answered her, “Tell me whether you sold the land for so much?” And she said, “Yes, for so much.” Then Peter said to her, “How is it that you have agreed together to test the Spirit of the Lord? Look, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out.” Then immediately she fell at his feet and breathed her last. And the young men came in and found her dead, and carrying her out, buried her by her husband. So great fear came upon all the church and upon all who heard these things.

Have we considered that everything that we have been given into our hands by God, to do with as we see fit, is showing God whether or not we will use the wisdom from above to make our decisions, or a wisdom from someplace else, driven by our own foolish carnal desires?

Ananias and Sapphira both had authority given to them, so that they could choose life according to godly wisdom, or death from wisdom of this world. They had a number of choices they could have made, but because the wisdom from above was not included in their thinking they became hypocrites and doomed themselves.

Another example of misuse of authority, based on a lack of godly wisdom, is in Matthew 25.

**Matthew 25:14-29** “For the kingdom of heaven is like a man traveling to a far country, who called his own servants and delivered his goods to them. And to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to each according to his own ability; and immediately he went on a journey. Then he who had received the five talents went and traded with them and made

another five talents. And likewise, he who had received two gained two more also. But he who had received one went and dug in the ground and hid his lord's money.

After a long time, the lord of those servants came and settled accounts with them. So, he who had received five talents came and brought five other talents, saying, 'Lord, you delivered to me five talents; look, I have gained five more talents besides them.' His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of you lord.' He also who had received two talents came and said, 'Lord, you delivered to me two talents; look, I have gained two more talents besides them. His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of you lord.'

Then he who had received the one talent came and said, 'Lord, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you have not sown, and gathering where you have not scattered seed. And I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the ground. Look, there you have what is yours.' But the lord answered and said to him, 'You wicked and lazy servant, you knew that I reap where I have not sown, and gather where I have not scattered seed. So you ought to have deposited my money with the bankers, and at my coming I would have received back my own with interest. Therefore take the talent from him and give it to him who has ten talents. For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away. And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'"

We all know that this is a clear example of diligence as opposed to laziness, but more importantly, is the reasoning of the lazy steward. His excuse came, not from the wisdom of God, but from another source that obviously was at enmity with God. The God, the Great God, the generous God, who does generously sow what He reaps and does gather what He generously scatters.

This second aspect is more important, more to the point of this sermon. It is not just about using our God-given authority, power, and gifts with the purity of truth and the wisdom that He graciously gives to us to properly use. We will get into this a little bit more in a minute.

Finally, in this section on God's delegated authority for our service to the whole body, please turn to what I consider to be the most important part for us today in considering this topic. Using our God-given authority, power, and gifts according to godly wisdom so that we do not cause stumbling among the brethren who do not have the same authority, power, and godly gifts.

**I Corinthians 8:1-13** Now concerning things offered to idols: We know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffs up, but love edifies. And if anyone thinks that he knows anything, he knows nothing, yet as he ought to know. But if anyone loves God, this one is known by Him. Therefore concerning the eating of things offered to idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is no other God but one. For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as there are many gods and many lords), yet for us there is only one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we for Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and through whom we live.

However, there is not in everyone that knowledge; for some, with consciousness of the idol, until now eat it as a thing offered to an idol; and their conscience, being weak, is defiled. But food does not commend us to God; for neither if we eat are we better, nor if we do not eat are we worse. But beware lest somehow this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to those who are weak. For if anyone sees you who have knowledge eating in an idol's temple, will not the conscience of him who is weak be emboldened to eat those things offered to idols? And because of your knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died? But when you thus sin against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ. Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never again eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble.

The word used for liberty in verse 9, is the same word used for authority in Christ's prayer in John 17:2. The authority we have been given may be with a deeper understanding than our brethren without the same gift. It is only through wisdom from above that we can correctly identify the fruit that will be produced in the way we use our power, authority, and gifts to enhance the whole body of Christ, in relationship with God.

If not used with godly wisdom we may become a stumbling block for our brethren. When we cause them to stumble, we cause our relationship with Jesus Christ to suffer. As Richard Ritenbaugh wrote about this chapter in his Bible study article "Clean and Unclean Meats,"

Notice that no mention is made of clean and unclean. Paul is speaking of unclean meats offered to idols, for some of the pagan deities were offered bullocks, sheep, goats, chickens, doves, and other clean animals, the remainder would of which would be offered for sale in the market. His main subject is not clean and unclean but being sensitive to a brother's conscience.

In John Ritenbaugh series on Satan, he said the following regarding verses 1-3:

These seemingly innocuous words may be the central issue in the whole book, or both books, to the Corinthians. Because this was the sin that led Satan to separate from God's government, he became puffed up about himself. Likewise, the Corinthians were puffed up about how much they knew. Satan thought so much of himself that he became twisted in his thinking, and he attacked God. We do not attack God directly. This book shows us we attack each other! Therein lies the problem. We attack each other through gossip, rumors, accusations, and things of that nature. We begin to draw up lists in our minds of the faults of those who have offended us, and we begin to withdraw from them. We will not associate with them, and division begins to occur because they offend us. We say to ourselves, "They were mean to me" or "They aren't intelligent enough" or "they are peculiar" or "they wear garish clothing." Or "They have strong opinions about unimportant things"

This is not to say that these things are not right and good, or one should be able to do his own thing at anytime, anywhere, and that others should tolerate it. Nevertheless, Satan can if he is given the opportunity, lead our minds to find reasons not to associate with others. Reasons that have nothing to do with sin. Satan is at work. If the feeling continues unabated, we will eventually come to the place where we will withdraw from fellowship all together. It will not happen quickly necessarily, but gradually. Perhaps we will stop attending Bible Study or begin to find reasons not to come to Sabbath services, or we will arrive late to services and leave early. In this way, Satan is slowly but surely moving us toward self-indulgence, rather than love.

The delegated power we only have by the grace of God to serve the body of Christ which may put us in a much better position to understand some of the truth of God's Word better than some of our beloved brethren, could very well not only end up being a stumbling block for others, but could actually drive us away from God. If we do not analyze the use and fruits of our godly-given authority with godly wisdom, we will fail to complete the work that God has entrusted to each with the authority of God, the authority that He alone has graciously given to each one of us for the benefit of the whole body with His outgoing concern.

The God-given power we have can never be used rightly unless it is combined with the God-given gift of His wisdom from above that will give us the same opportunity as Jesus Christ to proclaim a successful end to the work with the authority that we have now, as well as preparation for our responsibilities ahead.

**Proverbs 9:1-10** Wisdom has built her house, she has hewn out her seven pillars; she has slaughtered her meat, she has mixed her wine, she has also furnished her table. She has sent out her maidens, she cries out from the highest places of the city, "Whoever is simple, let him turn in here!" As for him who lacks understanding, she says to him, "Come, eat of my bread and drink of the wine which I have mixed. Forsake foolishness and live, and go in the way of understanding. He who reproves a scoffer gets shame for himself, and he who rebukes a wicked man only harms

himself. Do not reprove a scoffer, lest he hate you; rebuke a wise man, and he will love you. Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be still wiser; teach a just man, and he will increase in learning. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.”

In verse 1, we see a curious statement that most commentators find as an unimportant expression, from the personified wisdom speaking of itself within God’s careful work. They only look at it as keeping the number seven, which shows a perfection.

But, brethren, I think that we can find that this short verse is a reference to the superstructure of the principles used by God throughout His creation. They reflect the very things that we need to have always with us, to continue to complete the work God has given each of us the authority to do.

At this point again, it is good to remind ourselves that we have the perfect example of how God would complete His work as a human being, in the person of Jesus Christ. The very same pillars of wisdom that He erected, that He used to create all things to perfection, were being used by Him as a human being.

Therefore, if we want to follow in Jesus Christ’s footsteps in completing our work within the authority that we have been given to one degree or another, we need to know what these pillars of wisdom are, and where they can be found. The good thing is that we have been told exactly what they are, by an account from an eyewitness to Jesus Christ’s work. An account from someone who watched Him from the earliest days of His life on earth, all the way through His ascension.

There has been a discussion among commentators as to the identity of the author of this book. It seems more than likely that both this epistle to James, and the epistle to Jude, were written by Jesus Christ’s physical half brothers. These two were very likely among those family members who witnessed the miracle at the wedding feast at Cana. They most likely were also among those who sarcastically and scornfully said to Jesus, as recorded in John 7:3-5, “Depart from here and go to Judea, that your disciples may also see the works that you are doing. For no one does anything in secret. While he

himself seeks to be known. If you do these things, show yourself to the world.” For even His brothers did not believe Him.”

James and Jude were with their mother when it is mentioned to Jesus that His mother and brothers were there waiting to speak to Him. He proclaimed to those who were the called, His disciples at that time, that they were His mother and brothers. It is interesting that the incident, which is mentioned in Matthew 12, Mark 3, and Luke 8, took place as Jesus Christ was in the middle of a discussion with the Pharisees over the signs and wonders the Pharisees were demanding.

Jesus Christ told the Pharisees, probably within earshot of the physical family, that the only sign they would receive would be the sign of Jonah, three days and three nights in the grave. In going through the epistles of both James and Jude, you can see veiled references to this very conversation. It is also interesting that God made sure the apostle Paul made a point of Jesus Christ's presentation of Himself to His brother James following the resurrection, as recorded in I Corinthians 15:7. After the group of 500, He records that James and the apostles saw Him.

Finally, both James and Jude humbly presented themselves as bondservants of Jesus Christ, rather than making the claim of their own physical relationship with Him. Jude even merely claims a physical kinship with James, neither of them holding their physical kinship with Jesus as a badge of honor. Possibly even because they saw it as a badge of dishonor for the way they disrespected Him when He was there.

Consequently, both of these epistles give practical applications to the life of a Christian, rather the deep doctrinal understanding that we see from Paul. Because these two witnessed the word of God practically applying the mind of God for their whole lives.

**James 1:1-8** James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad. Greetings. My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing. If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God,

who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord. He is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

As you know the whole book of James has its foundation in wisdom. As a matter of fact, you can probably look at James as being the New Testament book of Proverbs.

**James 1:16-22** Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning. Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures. Therefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God. Therefore, lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.

**James 1:25-26** But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does. If anyone among you thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one's religion is useless.

**James 3:1-4** My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment. For we all stumble in many things. If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body. Indeed, we put bits in the horse's mouths that they may obey us, and we turn their whole body. Look also at ships; although they are so large and are driven by fierce winds, they are turned by a small rudder wherever the pilot desires.

Every one of us working under the authority that God has given us, has responsibility toward everyone else. We are all in training to be teachers, in outgoing concern for one another. We all must be careful with the gifts we have been given for the training process, that we turn the ship, that our part in turning the ship is a small rudder.

We all need to understand how important it is to take great care with the authority God has given to us, because even though that authority may be like a tongue, it is a little thing, it can steer a big ship. We have to make sure that together that ship is going in the right direction.

How do we do this? How do we make sure the authority that God has freely given to each and every one of us, and the power in the gifts He has given, is properly used in serving the brethren with all our hearts?

**James 3:12-18** Can a fig tree, my brethren, bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Thus no spring can yield both salt water and fresh. Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom. But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic. For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing will be there. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

In Proverbs 9:1, God tells us through the personification of wisdom, that wisdom is a seven-pillar superstructure built on the foundation that, of course, is Jesus Christ. All the works need to be done within these seven pillars of wisdom.

Here in James 3:17 God gives us the answer through James, what those seven pillars are, and James can tell us from an eyewitness account of thirty-some years, watching his elder brother, Jesus Christ, live a whole lifetime

using these same pillars, in all His relationships as a man. Christ used them just as He used these seven pillars of wisdom, in the activity in creating the heavens, earth, and all the universe.

So, brethren, here we have this superstructure within which we need to do our work within the authority, power, and gifts that we have been given so that we can complete the work just as James bears witness to of His elder physical brother. God tells us through James that wisdom with which we need to our work needs to be first pure, peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.

For lack of time, we will not dig into all these things, but perhaps you can do it on your own, in Bible studies in each of these rules of the road. I do want to go into them superficially today, but with the specific emphasis on power number one. James even declares it number one: To be pure. After all James himself points to pure as being number one. I think we will see in a moment that all these other pillars of wisdom join on this one.

Consider this almost like a tent, with the center post supporting the whole thing, being the number one supporting structure. All the other six parts of the superstructure arch from the edges toward the center, joined together at the top of the center pole of purity.

Right now let us look at the word pure. In Greek it is listed in *Strong's Concordance* #53, *agnos*, properly, clean, innocent, modest, perfect. It is translated variously as chaste, clean, pure. We can find this in eight different places in the New Testament. In II Corinthians 7: 11, we find it translated for being guiltless and clear for Jesus Christ.

**II Corinthians 11:2-4** For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he who comes preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or if you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted, you may well put up with it.

Brethren, one who is pure, chaste, clear, cannot follow, *must not follow*, anyone who preaches anything else than the simplicity of the gospel of the Kingdom of God that Jesus preached. Purity must be maintained in the purity of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The apostle Paul tells all the Philippian brethren they needed to put away foolish disputes and yield to one another, refocusing. As he wrote to the Philippians in chapter 4,

**Philippians 4:8-9** Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things. The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.

Focusing on the truth, that is, the pure word of Jesus Christ, all that He said, and all that He did, as Paul related to them, was vital. He may have very well received some of his examples of Christ's conduct from James himself during their meetings in Jerusalem. Examples of the way they themselves could produce the same pure, peaceable mind that would yield and produce the fruit of righteousness.

**I Timothy 5:21-22** [In Paul's instructions to Timothy regarding the use of his authority, power, and gifts, the apostle writes] I charge you before God and the Lord Jesus Christ and the elect angels that you observe these things without prejudice, doing nothing with partiality. Do not lay hands on anyone hastily, nor share in other people's sins; keep yourself pure.

This purity is the center post of the whole superstructure of the pillars of wisdom that ties together peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. Perhaps hypocrisy is the most grievous of sins. This ties together in wisdom and love.

The apostle Peter even makes a point, it is this purity of conduct, within the gifts, that will win over the unconverted.

**I Peter 3:1-4** Wives, likewise, be submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives, when they observe your chaste conduct accompanied by fear [of the Lord]. Do not let your adornment be merely outward—arranging hair, wearing gold, or putting on fine apparel—but let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the spirit of God.

Finally, tying the right use of a godly given authority, power, and gifts, under the pillars of wisdom, and the love of God.

**I John 3:1-3** Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

**I John 4:1-6** Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God. and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world. You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. They are of the world. Therefore they speak as of the world, and the world hears them. We are of God. He who knows God hears us; he who is not of God does not hear us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

**I John 4:17** Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world.

I began this message today with an eyewitness account of a president who is as much despised by many as the president is today. With the difference we can see that one made use of his godly given authority, with an eye toward some of the wisdom from above. The other is using his authority to fight a battle, some of the same battles, with the wisdom that is earthly, and it is only making things worse.

In no way is this meant a political statement, one way or the other, because the politics of this world are not within our authority under God at this time. This is merely a clear example for you and me of how God-given authority should or should not be used. God has given us the privilege to see things as He sees them from the sidelines. Because, brethren, our citizenship is in the Kingdom of God.

**I John 3:1-3** Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore, the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are the children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

**Proverbs 30:4-5** Who has ascended into heaven, or descended? Who has gathered the wind in His fists? Who has bound the waters in a garment? Who has established all the ends of the earth? What is His name. and what is His Son's name, if you know? Every word of God is pure. He is a shield to those who put their trust in Him.

We have been given God's gifts to serve the body of Christ, and those gifts need to be used under the pillars of wisdom. These pillars of wisdom have a center post of purity. In our eyewitness account to the life of Jesus Christ, His brother James has told us these are God's pillars of wisdom: First pure, then peaceable and gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, without hypocrisy. Now the fruit of righteousness, is sown in peace, by those who make peace.