

The House of God Who Controls Whom?

Studio Session 168

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In these teachings we have been discussing the house of God - the eternal presence of God among His people and in His people - in time. We have addressed many different aspects of this and the one aspect that is still to be resolved, or still to be brought forward, is the issue of control.

In the last episode we spoke about a spiritual house with an apostolic father as the one, like Paul, who brings order to an entire household of people and in turn the apostles are responsible for the unity of the Body of Christ so that being the member of a household results in fatherly discipline, correction but more importantly training and instruction in righteousness, the resolving of issues, of problems, the judging of matters, all these things that have largely been neglected in the church today because there's no framework in which for these things to be processed and brought to resolution. So as a consequence people simply skip around from church to church, taking the problems with them, endangering the fellowships wherever they go and more importantly and most importantly of all, never getting healed.

At the end of the last discourse I was talking about for example the right of appeal and I was using the example of my natural son to whom now I am a spiritual father. I was explaining that when a child comes to the age of being able to function on their own, if the parent continues to try to apply human discipline and influence upon their lives, then the children become resentful, especially if those children are married and have their own households. For example, when a man marries, when a woman marries, it's time for that person to be joined to their spouse in oneness and the end of the disciplining and training from a natural father or natural household, natural mother and father, comes to an end. But the end of the influence should not be simultaneous with that, the influence now needs to go to the level of spiritual because now they should have learned the discipline of their own natural circumstances, you should have taught them that by the time they're ready to leave. Now what they're ready for is a continuation of spiritual growth. And in addition to that, whenever people would be born again into the family of God and these people

have no spiritual training from their own households, from their own fathers and mothers, they now need spiritual fathers. They need to be raised up in the ways of God and somebody needs to be responsible and the point of fathering and of fatherhood is that someone now shows God the Father from the role and in the capacity of a spiritual father.

I was giving the example of how if there is a dispute between my natural son and his wife, how is that dispute to be resolved? They're still a very young couple and whereas he is the head that God has assigned over that house, he's not also capable of being her spiritual father because he's young. He's young and his lack of experience does not qualify him to be a father. Who then is her spiritual father? I am his natural father, he chose me voluntarily to be his spiritual father. So now I don't try to raise him, I have raised him, now I try to be a spiritual father to him and provide for him spiritual counsel. But to whom does she look for spiritual counsel? She also looks to me but she doesn't have to, I was her choice just as my son had to choose me as his spiritual Father; I did not automatically become his spiritual father. I am his natural father and always will be that but my role in that capacity has ended; he left me when he married her and I ought to have encouraged him to leave that place of my raising and now go on his own and take up the household that God had given to him. But his need for spiritual raising is by no means concluded because now, as a young man, he needs to be brought to the maturity that God intends for him to come to so that he in turn may rule in the house of God and he's not capable of doing that yet because he's still a novice.

So if there is a dispute between my son and his wife, I judge the matter not as his natural father but as his spiritual father and her spiritual father as well. So it's a dispute in my house between two sons. At that point, the fact that one of them is my natural son accounts for nothing. If he's wrong I will correct him as a spiritual father should, by the standards of righteousness. If he's right, I will agree with him. If she's right, I will agree with her and if she's wrong I will correct her because that is the order of a patriarch. When you have two households, at least, in your house then you move from being a family to being a household and you're on this journey of being a patriarch.

Now in the Old Testament we are familiar with the term “patriarch”, it is derived from the word for “father”. But a patriarch was not someone who had the day to day responsibility of running a family. A spiritual patriarch does not have the duty of running the day to day affairs of families; he is a remote father, he is a father who is not involved in the day to day affairs of the household, the natural father is now the one who does that. And the patriarch is one who resolves disputes, but more importantly and in the Old Testament model, the patriarch was one who connected the generations to the promise. Abraham, the patriarch of his line, connected the

generations that came after him to the promise that God had given to him.

Now the Old Testament and the Hebraic model is a fleshly model. In other words, Abraham begat Isaac, who begat Jacob, who begat the twelve tribes. They were all related by blood and so this was a natural picture of what is a spiritual house. Paul is the equivalent in the New Testament - to the Gentiles - of Abraham in the Old Testament. Paul is the initial father of the gospel among the Gentiles and Paul's role, by his own speaking of it, Paul's role was to connect the Gentiles to the promise that God had established with Abraham in the Old Testament. Paul was raised up specifically to connect the Gentiles to that part of the promise that said, "And in thy seed," when God promised Abraham, "in thy seed I will bless all the nations of earth, the Jew and the Gentile." Abraham's model is a type and shadow of the New Testament. A type and a shadow is like a curtain pulled between the play that is going on and the audience. The veil distorts the picture so it cannot be seen with the clarity of its resolution. That's because when man began to see things by the soul, the things that God continued to present, the truths that God continued to present leading to Christ and subsequently to the church, could only be seen as in a mirror dimly. And Paul said there will come a time when that format would give way to a face-to-face clarity. Well when the veil of the temple was torn in two, men could enter through the veil and now see things as they are. Therefore, Abraham and the covenant of circumcision was all about the flesh and God's intention ultimately to remove the flesh so that the reality could be seen. But in Abraham's model of the patriarchal, it began and ended with a fleshly patriarchy. Nevertheless, He connected his generations to the promise.

In the New Testament Paul connects the Gentiles to the reality, not to the shadow and the type but to the reality. They were not his natural children, they were his spiritual children.

Now in types and shadows we can only see in a veiled way what the reality is meant to be, but the lifting of the veil permits us to see the reality as God intended. By the Spirit the veil is lifted, but when Moses is read the veil is restored. Today, the difficulty in seeing the spiritual patriarchy of the New Testament as the arrangement of the house of God for the care of the people and for their connectedness to the promise that God had made to Abraham to be fulfilled in Christ and to be communicated and administrated by Paul, the failure to see that is because one of the problems today is going back to and reasserting the veil as a means by which to see this matter of the patriarch. So people will say, "Yes I agree that the patriarchal model does exist in the Old Testament but no I don't agree that it exists in the New Testament." Albeit Paul says, "I am your father" and he's not their natural father. Therefore what kind of father is he? He's a spiritual father.

So one of the issues that blocks the vision of this is that we do not see that the

patriarchal model of the Old Testament is a fleshly rendition as a type and a shadow of what will become the spiritual reality and indeed the actual reality in the New Testament where it would be a spiritual house as opposed to a carnal house, where the father in the New Testament would be a spiritual father, whereas the fathers in the Old Testament were blood related to their offspring. Yet the house of God in the Old Testament and in the New Testament is one continuous story; in the Old Testament it is maintained in types and shadows until the purpose for the type and shadow evaporates and the New Testament presents the reality. So today, as it was in the first century when the church first came into being, the apostolic fathers were meant to be the fathers of the spiritual households that would be responsible for people's care and well being to bring them to maturity.

Now the second set of questions that's typically asked go like this, "Well if you say there's spiritual fathers, how do you deal with the issue of control...how do you deal with the issue of control?" And many books now are being written about loving the Father and avoiding the whole matter of accountability and discipline and are judging that to be not necessary because of the potential of people being controlled. Everybody who is advocating these things are in fact reacting to the Roman model... to the Roman model, which is nothing if it isn't about control. It's neither the Hebraic model nor the Roman model, it is something else. It is the house of God that was never presented accurately or fully by the patriarchal model of the Old Testament and definitely not presented and I would say not at all, by the Roman model of the New Testament. What do I mean by "the Roman model"? The Roman model of the New Testament came about when Constantine decided, for political reasons, to adopt the Christian faith as the official religion of the Roman empire. Now Rome always had an official religion, it was paganism. And paganism and Roman religion were established together. Numa Pompilius, the fabled king of Rome when Rome had seven kings, in 732B.C. established the temple of Vesta and the Campidoglio in Rome and the worship of Vesta became the centerpiece of Roman life. In fact the Vestal Virgins tended the flame of Rome in the temple of Vesta and it was said that if the flame ever went out, the Roman empire would be extinguished.

So Rome had an original religion and all through it's growth as an empire, it maintained its religion. It added deities to its religious pantheon but Rome's religion opposed the Christian religion at the very outset of the Christian faith. It was the Roman empire that sought to exterminate Christians because the belief was that the emperors now were the "Pontifex Maximus"; that is, they were the bridges between the gods and the people. The Christian religion of the early days of the Christian faith did not agree that A) the Roman emperors were gods and B) that they were the bridge to the gods. They didn't believe there were many gods, they believed there was only one God and they believed that the One who linked the people to the one

God was the Lord Jesus Christ and not the Caesar.

So for these reasons they were called atheists. And often when the Christians were being persecuted and killed in places the Circus Maximus as the half time entertainment, the crowd would yell, "Kill the atheists! Kill the atheists!" because the Christians did not believe that the emperors were gods so they were called atheists. Rome had an official religion. When the empire had expanded to such an extent that up to 10% of the Roman empire were Christians, Constantine passed an edict reversing the earlier decision of the last of the Flavian emperors, one named Domitian who outlawed Christianity in the Roman empire. The edict that was passed in 313 A.D., or the Edict of Milan, the title of which was The Edict of Toleration, re-enfranchised the Christians as legitimate citizens of the Roman empire, paving the way for Constantine to make Christianity the official religion of the empire because the empire needed cohesive forces and the Christian faith was the single, largest constituency that joined people together in the Roman empire. So it was for political reasons that Constantine wanted the empire "Christianized" but the idea of making a state church was not new to the Romans, they always had a state church, it was new to the Christian faith because it was never the official religion of any state, it was the kingdom of heaven and Jesus had said that this kingdom was greater than any kingdom in the earth and was greater than all the kingdoms of the earth.

So when Constantine offered this model to the church, to be a Christian all you would every have to be is already a citizen of the empire. At this point, the framework of the church was not about converting people to Christ and to the kingdom of God. By this being the official religion of the Roman empire, you could simply be a Roman and be a Christian. By the way, that's exactly the format today of all state religions that originated from this concept. If you're a member of the Anglican church today, it's because you're born in a British society and as such you're a citizen of the state and you're a member of the church. That is why the process of quote "confirmation" is required where more or less at the point of adulthood you then consent to be confirmed in what you already are. So the creed of the Roman and the Anglican church and of the state churches is, "I was made a Christian when my name was given." In other words when you were baptized as a child you were a struggling child in your parents arms, far from any ability to choose any of this, "you were made a Christian when your name was given, one of God's dear children and an heir of heaven." That's how the rubric goes. Now once that's so, the church's purpose was to account to the state, the Roman model required the church to account to the state for the authority and the power of the state that the church wielded because the church was one of the infrastructure pieces of the state; the church was part of the culture of the state. So now, rather than people being brought to Christ and there actually being spiritual fathers to raise them up, the

presumption was you were baptized into the church as an infant and as such you were already in the church organization.

So the model came to be the model of the parish and the priest; the dioceses and the bishop and so on. Why? Because at that point the father was not your spiritual father, the father was the figure who represented the churches authority over you in the physical geography where you lived. Does that sound familiar? What is he there to do? He's there to control you according to the requirements of the church and ultimately the requirements of the state.

When the Roman empire dissolved into history, all that remained was the church of the empire. It still had the form but no empire, so it reconvened the nations under something known as "The Holy Roman Empire" and continued to exercise control over the people. Such total control as would send the armies of Europe, over a 250 year period, to rescue the eastern Roman church from the Muslims, an episode in history known as "The Crusades". When the reformation came it didn't change any of that, it simply split up the empire but the model of the state church continued.

And that's the ecclesiastical background against which, today, people think about the spiritual father because the operating church congregation today, is still that model. Someone who is in control for the purpose of, in this case, the denomination, or for the purpose of the continuity of the church. Neither the Old Testament model of the fleshly patriarchy, nor the historical model of the Roman church is the operating framework against which we could possibly understand the order of spiritual fathers and of spiritual houses. And yet the criticism of the truth of spiritual houses, which was the New Testament model, is being leveled by the one side or the other. And the immediate objections are derived from the measurement of this truth by standards that do not understand this truth. You see?

So the question is: Who is in control? And the answer is: this isn't about control, this is about the fathers showing the Father to the sons and it's about being fathers and sons. Paul writes one of his last letters from the Marmatine Prison in Rome, he's anticipating being executed nearly any day. If you are writing your last letter or one of your very last letters knowing your end is imminent, to whom would you address the letter and what would you say? 2Timothy is such a letter and Paul writes to his son whom he loves and he writes the final things that represent the most important things that he had to say. It's time that we stop seeing the Bible through the prism of Old Testament symbology or the model of Roman control which is historically the ecclesiastical history. When Paul writes to Timothy and says, "My son whom I love" this isn't just some religious, made-up title; this is th actual reality. He has a son and he loves him and he writes his most precious things to him. When Paul moves off the scene and joins the ages, Timothy arises as one of the leaders of the church because he is the son of Paul.

The reason that orphans aren't being brought to maturity is: they're fatherless, going to church doesn't change that. You have to have a spiritual father, you must belong to a spiritual house. Otherwise, you'll go to heaven but you will be immature.

I am Sam Soleyn and I'll see you next time. God bless you, bye bye.