

Ground Rules - Exhortation

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Yesterday was Veteran's day and the day before was the day marked as the holiday for it. Isn't that confusing? So we thank the veterans for all they've done. It is always wonderful to have those who are willing to step up and defend freedom. The scriptures have a lot to say about freedom, doesn't it? We are thankful indeed.

I would like share a little bit this morning about Church order - discipline and accountability. I think almost everybody here has heard this message in some way shape or form. However it never hurts to remind ourselves that we are under authority and especially the authority of Christ. I like this scripture in John chapter 7:15-18.

¹⁵ And the Jews marveled, saying, "How does this Man know letters, having never studied?"

So here He is teaching at the Feast in the Temple, something He said He wouldn't do and here He finds Himself doing it! Furthermore He is actually being criticized and analyzed, *"How can He be speaking like this? He is not an ordained minister."* So I think that is interesting because on the Air Base in Newburgh they are looking for a new chaplain. And of course they are not looking for an "ordained minister." Does anybody know what ordination means? It means that you are approved by a Church of believers to preach the Word, in that sense, to be a teacher. So being "ordained" is important but *it doesn't take a school education in order to do that*. In fact most schools will just suck the life out of you in these days.

¹⁶ Jesus answered them and said, "My doctrine is not Mine, but His who sent Me.

So it speaks about a *relationship* we have with God the Father, rather than the amount of education we may or may not have. Then He says:

¹⁷ *If anyone wills to do His (our Father in Heaven) will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or whether I speak on My own authority.*

¹⁸ ***He who speaks from himself seeks his own glory; . . .***

I know we don't intentionally do that but a lot of times, including myself, we end up doing just that! I want to make sure I do that as few times as possible, that I am not really speaking on my own account but I AM under His authority and being that way I am also Accountable, Correctable and Teachable to the elders of the Church who God has set apart to oversee what the Lord is doing in our midst. So that means that if I sense that God is doing something that's different from what we are usually doing, I don't just get up and make that announcement *but I talk to the elders first*. You will see elders conferring with other elders because they are submitting one to another. They don't have the freedom to just get up and say, "I think we should do X or Y or Z." But the elders want to find the mind of God in the midst of the congregation.

Now I know on our Friday night meetings we have a lot more latitude than we do on Sundays. That is by design. It isn't by accident. Friday nights are meant to be body ministry and sharing, the freedom of that. It means that we "lax the rules or guidelines" so to speak. However, if you suddenly find yourself in "hot water" outside the scriptural context of what God is doing, *the elders will talk to you . . .* at some point in time. It may be one-on-one, or maybe in the elder's meeting; it may be however it happens. It is not meant to be punitive in any way shape or form. It is meant to correct and "bring back" and make people better understand what God is doing. That is really what it is all about.

In verse 18, Jesus talks about that. He talks mostly about NOT what is being said, but rather *motivation*. So in a lot of what we say and do we should first examine our motivation.

¹⁸ *He who speaks from himself seeks his own glory; but He who seeks the glory of the One who sent Him is true, and no unrighteousness is in Him.*

So that is really talking about motivation. Many times that is what it is about. It is not what you say; it is how you are motivated to say it.

Sometimes people come in anger and speak the word of God *and it is not the word of God because it is spoken in anger!* Sometimes someone might just want to “be known” as the elder in charge or whatever. (There is no elder in charge by the way. Jesus is in charge, not us.)

Isn't it wonderful that we can have Body Ministry and as we have Body Ministry the tendency for chaos increases. Right. Let's be honest. So that means more oversight is needed. I remember Carl Kinbar (who used to be an elder here) sharing these thoughts because Body Ministry is-what-it-is in the Lord's heart not necessarily ours. Myself, I like to see things orderly and done orderly, etc. However the Lord really likes to hear the expression of life in you. In order for that to happen, there has to be less order, maybe even more chaos. But still everybody has to know that they need to be 1) Accountable to someone and to the people they are ministering to. 2) Correctable. That means that when you are corrected you don't say, *“Oh! Why am I being corrected??”* You need to be correctable. 3) Teachable. That means you have to say, *“Oh well. Am I learning something here?”* Right. 4) Submitted. This means you are not going to run off and say, *“Well forget that Church!”*

It is easy to say these words, Accountable, Correctable, Teachable and Submitted. But it is a lot harder to *live* them. Isn't that right? If you are called into the elder's meeting, believe me many people are, it is not meant to be a frightful experience. It shouldn't be. The doors of the elders meeting are open. Even if you weren't invited, please feel that you are. You can come in any time you want and knock on the door and say, *“I have something I want to talk to you guys about.”* We will gladly welcome you. Gladly. I like to see that kind of thing.

There are a lot of other things I could say about order in the Church but I would like to particularly mention prophecy. I think sometimes prophetic words can be confusing *especially when there are a lot of them*. Once when we prayed for somebody there were around fifteen, twenty, or thirty prophecies for this poor guy! I couldn't remember what God said to him, never mind himself. Even if I took notes, it would have been hard for me to sort out.

So, prophetic words should be clear. In 1 Corinthians 14:26-33, Apostle Paul writes, “*Let two or three prophets speak and let the others judge*” The idea behind that is to avoid any chance of confusion especially when you have a large congregation. I’m not really talking about Friday nights here. I am talking about when we meet together on Sundays. We don’t really have a large congregation any more but we still have the idea that it is Church as we come together and share the love of God that is in our heart. Because of that we really want (speaking for the elders of the Church) to be orderly. We really want to be free to prophesy, to share an exhortation and like this morning to come up here and exhort you on the order that God wants in our midst. That is to be Accountable, Correctable and Teachable, Submitted, all of those things.

We could visit this subject again and probably will. However I just wanted to make sure that we are not doing things on our own initiative. Just like Jesus says here:

18 He who speaks from himself seeks his own glory; but He who seeks the glory of the One who sent Him is true, and no unrighteousness is in Him.

There is a process going on here and we need to know and understand that we are not to be speaking from our own self.

So Father, we thank You that you brought us together this morning to hear Your Word, to praise Your name in songs being set before us. And these musicians have labored and prayed to know what songs to bring forth in the service today, not by accident but by purpose and design. That we would fall in love with You again and again and again. More importantly that we would usher in the very presence of God in our midst which we take so much advantage of. We think nothing of it any more. We are going to go to Church and we are going to find the presence of God. But isn’t it a wonderful thing, Lord God, that You are doing that in our midst, over and over and over again. So we lay out our hearts today, submitted to You. Because we are submitted to you, we are submitted to the others who are here. We ask You, Lord God, to cover us with Your mercy and grace. That covering is a wonderful place to be, in Jesus’ name. Amen