

602 Why Should God Have Authority in my life?

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God's Answers to Life's Questions

I am amazed at the number of people who want a God they can pray to and call out to when they need Him but have no desire to let Him rule in their lives. They want a Savior; they want heaven; they want respect; but they do not want a Lord to whom they must one day give an account. Some folks think of God as a kind, old grandfather figure whose job it is to pat us on the head and tell us what great people we are but not to get involved in running our lives. They want his love and kindness but not his commandments and laws. Are we under God's laws today and why should He have power to rule over us?

In each of our lives there is a battle going on. It is a war of wills, a war rooted in self, a war for power to rule our lives. That war is between our own desires and the will of God. It is a lifelong battle, because even when one commits himself to God at one point, one may leave God behind at another. Selfish desire is at the root of this battle, an unwillingness to give up what I want when I want it, even if God calls it sin. Human beings may acknowledge there is a God in heaven, but they have not always been willing to allow Him to rule in their lives. They prefer to follow their own paths and desires, often to their own ruin. The lure of power is strong.

When Satan tempted Eve in the beginning, he challenged the right of God to rule in their lives. Genesis 3:1-7 says: Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?" And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'" But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die." The devil, of course, lied. He was appealing to selfish desire.

The devil continues, "For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate." She ate, thinking not of the will of the Father but her own desires, and Adam who was not deceived ate along with her. They allowed their own desires to make the decision as to what they would do. Their eyes were opened and they saw that they were naked.

When people rebel against the will of God, there comes a time when they must face God with their decisions. Later in chapter three, God casts both the man and woman out of the garden for their disobedience. When they chose their own desires over God, they forfeited the blessings of God. Sin builds a wall between God and men. Isaiah said, "Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save, or his ear dull, that it cannot hear; but your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not hear" (Isaiah 59:1-2). Sin separates us from the God who made us.

Our Father in heaven is indeed the God who made us. We would never have been had it not been for the God who created us and everything it takes to sustain our lives. He not only gave us life and breath and all things, He made the entire universe to provide a life for us. You could not breathe without God's air. You could not quench your thirst without God's water. You could not eat any vegetables without God's sun and rain. You could not build a house without God's trees for wood or God's clay for bricks. You would not have

clothes to wear without God's wool and cotton. Everything we have comes from the hand and the goodness of God.

James said in James 1:16-17, "Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change." God has blessed us so very richly with so many good things that it is easy to take them for granted and forget they were gifts in the first place. We did not create ourselves, and without God we could do nothing. Whatever we have, we have because of God. Whatever we are, we are because of God. Whatever talents we possess, we possess them because God gave them to us. This is why we owe God our very souls.

God gave us our souls. God "breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being" (Genesis 2:7). It is in God that we live and move and have our very being (Acts 17:28). Our souls or spirits comprise not only the life that is in us; it also is our inner being, where we think and feel and make decisions. You are you as a person because God made you. The Hebrew writer in Hebrews 12:9 speaks of God as the "Father of our spirits." There is a spark of the divine in all of us in that God has made us in His image and after His likeness. We are God's creatures and owe to Him our all, simply because we Him we would be nothing.

Your soul is not some small gift. It is the only thing you possess that you will take into eternity. Your soul is worth more than all the money you can raise, more than all the world. Jesus asked in Matthew 16:26, "For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?" You only have one soul; it is yours for eternity! What you do with it now will affect how you will spend eternity—whether with God or without Him. You cannot buy your way into heaven or bargain for eternity with things. The God who made your soul will one day hold that very soul accountable to what He teaches.

The Hebrew writer said in Hebrews 4:12-13, "For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do." God looks down into all our souls or hearts. None of us are hidden from His sight, and we are accountable to Him. What we do with our lives here matters, for one day we will have to stand before Him to be judged for all the things we have done in this life.

Paul said in 2 Corinthians 5:10, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil." God has given us this life to live as we desire. He has made us free moral agents. But the choices we make in this life have consequences for good or bad. In the end we are accountable to God for the life we have lived. We are accountable because the Lord of heaven and earth, who created us and sustains us with life, has given His will in the Bible. He expects men to obey that will and will punish those who rebel against that will. It matters how we live!

I sometimes hear people say, "**It's my life, and I can live it any way I want to.**" Yes, it's your life. You can live it however you please; but if you live a life in rebellion to God, you will have to live with the consequences of that choice. Paul said in Romans 6:16, "Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness?" You

can choose to live in any way you please. But in your choosing, remember that you become a slave either of sin or of obedience. You cannot serve sin and expect God to bless you.

I fear that many people do just that. They live the way they choose and expect God to be happy. They must think either that God doesn't notice or that God is naïve. David spoke of the wicked in Psalm 94. He spoke of how they talked to themselves, "The Lord does not see; the God of Jacob does not perceive." (verse 7). He replies, "Understand, O dumbest of the people! Fools, when will you be wise? He who planted the ear, does he not hear? He who formed the eye, does he not see?" (verses 8-9). Of course, God sees and knows. Just because God does not respond immediately does not mean there will be no response at all. A day will come.

We have been asking the question, "Why should God have authority in my life?" We wonder why a person is asking that question. Why would we not want God in our lives? Are we so wise, do we know so much that we can live our lives with never a thought toward God? It has been the temptation in every generation for men to rebel against God and to go their own way. What good has it done them? It is only when men live lives according to God's will that life begins to prosper. Every time man has chosen to go his own way, he has found himself in trouble. Man was not made to live without God, without His love, His blessing, and His guidance.

We are living in a society that seems to tell God to "hush up" at every opportunity. Much of the reason men do not want to live under the authority of God is because they do not want to live by His teachings and commandments. They simply don't want God telling them what to do. They forget that every law God gives is for their best interest. God is not trying to enslave us; He is trying to free us from the traps found in this world that will destroy us. When He gives us His commandments, He does so to protect us from the sorry consequences others have faced by their behavior. He has no desire to see the same thing happen to us.

Ezekiel helps us to understand the heart of God in Ezekiel 18:26-28, "When a righteous person turns away from his righteousness and does injustice, he shall die for it; for the injustice that he has done he shall die. Again, when a wicked person turns away from the wickedness he has committed and does what is just and right, he shall save his life. Because he considered and turned away from all the transgressions that he had committed, he shall surely live; he shall not die." Now God has no desire to condemn anyone. He wishes that every person would live a righteous life and live with Him eternally. God loves every person with a great love.

Ezekiel 18:30-32 says, "Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, declares the Lord God. Repent and turn from all your transgressions, lest iniquity be your ruin. Cast away from you all the transgressions that you have

committed, and make yourselves a new heart and a new spirit! Why will you die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Lord God; so turn, and live." God wants each of us to live righteous lives with a "new" heart and a "new" spirit of love and obedience. No one can continue in sin, breaking God's laws and His heart and expect that he will surely go unpunished.

The grace of God is deep and wide. It is able to cleanse every sin and to save every sinner. God wants to save man so badly that He was willing to send His Son Jesus Christ to the cruel cross, so that He might sacrifice Himself to atone for our sins. God loves you that much, but He also hates the sin that curses man that much. He hates sin, all sin, your sins and mine. He doesn't just hate what sins others do; He also hates the sins that you do. He is for you, to help you and me rise above the sin and the evil in this world, but we must give Him the place He deserves. We must let Him rule in our lives. He is our shepherd to lead, protect, and to bless us.

That's why we need to listen when God speaks, to live under His authority. We need to "sanctify Christ as Lord in our hearts" (1 Pet. 3:15). My friend, have you obeyed the gospel of Christ? Do you believe that Jesus is the Christ? Will you repent of your sins? Will you confess before others your faith in Christ as the Son of God? Will you be baptized into Christ, immersed in water, for the forgiveness of your sins? God has a wonderful life in store for you if you will allow Him to be "Lord" of your life. Would you do that today? The Lord is inviting you to become part of His family. There is no greater privilege.

God made us free moral agents, and that means He gives us the freedom to choose how we will live. Though God gives us commandments, He does not twist our arms. God did not make us puppets or robots. He made us in His own likeness, after His own image with a heart and a will. He made us this way not to curse us but to allow us to choose Him freely, to love Him freely as He loves us freely. God wants our hearts, not as slaves but as His children by choice. This is why the gospel message goes out to "whosoever will" hear and believe it. Whoever believes and obeys Him will find joy and peace and blessing. I hope that is the way you think.

So much of life is attitude. Christianity is not a drudgery or a burden to the person who loves God and wants to serve Him; rather it is a pleasure. I've never regretted living for the Lord. I never felt cheated that I didn't have a hangover or wake up in jail. I never felt cheated that I didn't have a disease from promiscuity. I never felt cheated that I was at church on Sunday mornings, the Lord's day, to be with my brothers and sisters in Christ. I know that if I am faithful to the Lord, eternal life awaits me. I don't want to miss that. I know that God has reserved a place for me, and I don't want to risk losing my inheritance from my heavenly Father.

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