

EXAMINING THE SUPERSTRUCTURE OF THE CHURCH

July, 1994 - Selected Scriptures

Dennis McBride

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On a recent trip to the East Coast, Carol and I drove from Springfield, Virginia, to New York City. As we traveled, I was struck with the differences in architectural styles: Colonial Virginia, Amish farms of Pennsylvania, industrial complexes of New Jersey, and the engineering masterpieces of New York's Manhattan skyline.

Despite the variety of styles, every building had one thing in common: structural integrity. That's the key ingredient that keeps a building upright. Granted, some have more than others do, but without adequate integrity a building cannot stand.

We toured some impressive buildings, such as New York's World Trade Center in Manhattan. But much of what we saw in those structures was decorative and had nothing to do with their integrity. In fact, you could eliminate windows, drop ceilings, doors, partitions, lighting fixtures, carpeting, and a number of other niceties without affecting the building's integrity at all.

However, if the superstructure of a building is compromised, the results will soon be obvious. We saw a graphic illustration of that in the aftermath of the recent Northridge earthquake. Prior to that quake, if you were to look at the Northridge Meadows Apartments, you would have seen a building similar to the many other apartment buildings in that neighborhood. Yet when the earth shook, placing enormous stress on those buildings, the flaws were revealed and the Northridge Meadows Apartment complex crumbled, taking several lives with it.

A spiritual parallel is found in Matthew 7:24-27, where Jesus says,

Everyone who hears these words of Mine, and acts upon them, may be compared to a wise man, who built his house upon the rock. And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and burst against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded upon the rock.

And everyone who hears these words of Mine, and does not act upon them, will be like a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand. And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and burst against that house; and it fell, and great was its fall.

Not only is the foundation upon which we build important, but so also is the structural integrity of the building itself. So as we evaluate the overall strength of our church, we must by all means avoid structure without stability, form without foundation, and function without biblical content. The way to do that is to identify a biblical skeletal structure that will give shape, substance, and stability not only to our church, but to our individual Christian lives as well.

Here, then, is the superstructure upon which we hang every other aspect of ministry--the non-negotiable truths that we should know as well as we know anything from Scripture. They are:

- ***A HIGH VIEW OF GOD***
- ***THE ABSOLUTE AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURE***
- ***DOCTRINAL PURITY***
- ***PERSONAL HOLINESS***
- ***SPIRITUAL AUTHORITY***

We teach toward a high view of God, the absolute authority of Scripture, and doctrinal purity. We apply what we've learned so we can cultivate personal holiness. As a church family we function under spiritual authority.

Every conflict our church faces is the result of compromising one or more of these principles. On the positive side, we will never face a situation we can't resolve by affirming and applying these principles.

I. A HIGH VIEW OF GOD

A. A BRIEF REVIEW

- 1. The first teaching series we shared together emphasized the priorities of glorifying, loving, and worshiping God. We've returned to those themes often because they are so important.***
- 2. We are less of a church than God called us to be if we are not characterized by:***
 - Knowing God (in a personal saving relationship)
 - Knowing about God (having an accurate view of who He is)
 - Seeking to love, worship, and glorify Him
 - Fearing Him (reverential awe)
 - Taking Him seriously
- 3. Similarly, you are not yet the person God created you to be if you do not:***
 - Know God (have a personal saving relationship)
 - Know about God (have an accurate view of who He is)
 - Seek to love, worship, and glorify Him
 - Fear Him
 - Take Him seriously
- 4. Above all else, knowing God must be the pursuit of our lives (Phil. 3:8-14).***

B. A QUOTE FROM A.W. TOZER

“What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us. . . .

“Without doubt, the mightiest thought the mind can entertain is the thought of God, and the weightiest word in any language is its word for God. . . .

“A right conception of God is basic not only to systematic theology but to practical Christian living as well. It is to worship what the foundation is to the temple; where it is inadequate or out of plumb the whole structure must sooner or later collapse. I believe there is scarcely an error in doctrine or a failure in applying Christian ethics that cannot be traced finally to imperfect and ignoble thoughts about God.

“For this reason the gravest question before the Church is always God Himself, and the most [revealing] fact about any man is not what he at a given time may say or do, but what he in his deep heart conceives God to be like. . . .

“Always the most revealing thing about the Church is her idea of God, just as her most significant message is what she says about Him or leaves unsaid, for her silence is often more eloquent than her speech. She can never escape the self-disclosure of her witness concerning God. . . .

“The heaviest obligation lying upon the Christian Church today is to purify and elevate her concept of God until it is once more worthy of Him--and of her. In all her prayers and labors this should have first place. We do the greatest service to the next generation of Christians by passing on to them undimmed and undiminished that noble concept of God which we received from our Hebrew and Christian fathers of generations past. This will prove of greater value to them than anything that art or science can devise” (*The Knowledge of the Holy*, pp. 9-12).

C. SOME PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

1. ***We want to be a growing, significant church that truly makes a difference.***
 - a. But why should anyone come here?
 - b. Why should people look to us over others?
 - c. What do we have to offer that is beyond anything the world can offer?

- We can offer meaningful human relationships. But the world can offer that.
 - We can offer music that lifts the human spirit. But the world can offer that.
 - We can stimulate the intellect, lifting one's thoughts above the trivial and mundane. But the world can offer that.
 - We can motivate one toward meaningful social and political involvement. But the world can offer that.
 - We can teach one to look beyond one's self to invest one's life in others. But the world can offer that.
- d. People should come here because we offer a high view of God!
- e. Someone might respond, "Yes, but other churches offer God too, so why should someone choose this church over another?"

Because we offer an accurate, clear, biblical view of God, and are uncommonly committed who He is and what He expects of us. People of spiritual substance will be drawn to such a standard. If that's not true of us, then there is no reason for them to come here.

2. *We want to be an evangelistic church*

- a. But no one will legitimately turn to Christ apart from the burden that falls upon the human soul at the realization that it has offended a holy and just God, and stands in peril of eternal damnation.
- b. And no one will come to that realization apart from a proper understanding of who God is, as revealed in His Word.
- c. A god who winks at sin is comfortable to embrace but doesn't inspire awe, fear, repentance, or holiness.
- d. Similarly, a god who caters to our every selfish whim, with no regard for what is wise or best for us, doesn't inspire awe, fear, repentance, or holiness.

- e. Additionally, an indispensable element in lending credibility to the truth of who God is, is *A PEOPLE WHO LIVE TAKE THEY BELIEVE HIM*.
 - f. As one critic said, “Show me a truly redeemed life and I might be more inclined to believe in your Redeemer!”
 - g. That’s where personal holiness enters into the picture. But personal holiness results from encountering the God who is holy.
3. ***We want to have a relevant message that challenges and encourages people of all ages.***

We have a relevant God, and we have been entrusted with a message that is at once timeless, unchanging, and always relevant.

4. ***We want to appeal to man, but we mustn’t be a man-centered church.***

“We must take God seriously and exalt Him We are to reach out to everyone in the love of Christ, but God is to be the focus of our worship and our life. Therefore, we shouldn’t look at the Bible as a book full of formulas for solving problems; it is a book that reveals God” (*The Anatomy of a Church*, John MacArthur, p. 11).

D. GOD’S COUNSEL TO ISRAEL

1. ***What did it mean for Israel to have a high view of God?***

Deut. 6:4-25 - “Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one! And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.

“And these words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart; and you shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up. And you shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead. And you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

“Then it shall come about when the Lord your God brings you into the land which He swore to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to give you, great and splendid cities which you did not build, and houses full of all good things which

you did not fill, and hewn cisterns which you did not dig, vineyards and olive trees which you did not plant, and you shall eat and be satisfied, then watch yourself, lest you forget the Lord who brought you from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

“You shall fear only the Lord your God; and you shall worship Him, and swear by His name. You shall not follow other gods, any of the gods of the peoples who surround you, for the Lord your God in the midst of you is a jealous God; otherwise the anger of the Lord your God will be kindled against you, and He will wipe you off the face of the earth.

“You shall not put the Lord your God to the test, as you tested Him at Massah. You should diligently keep the commandments of the Lord your God, and His testimonies and His statutes which He has commanded you. And you shall do what is right and good in the sight of the Lord, that it may be well with you and that you may go in and possess the good land which the Lord swore to give your fathers, by driving out all your enemies from before you, as the Lord has spoken.

“When your son asks you in time to come, saying, ‘What do the testimonies and the statutes and the judgments mean which the Lord our God commanded you?’ then you shall say to your son, ‘We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt; and the Lord brought us from Egypt with a mighty hand. Moreover, the Lord showed great and distressing signs and wonders before our eyes against Egypt, Pharaoh and all his household; and He brought us out from there in order to bring us in, to give us the land which He had sworn to our fathers.’

“So the Lord commanded us to observe all these statutes, to fear the Lord our God for our good always and for our survival, as it is today. And it will be righteousness for us if we are careful to observe all this commandment before the Lord our God, just as He commanded us.”

2. ***In summary, to an Israelite a high view of God included:***
 - a. Understanding Him accurately (v. 4, 13-19).
 - b. Loving Him supremely (v. 5).
 - c. Exalting His Word as the supreme influence and authority of life (vv. 6-9).

- d. Praising, worshiping, and glorifying Him for His gracious and powerful works (vv. 10-12).
- e. Teaching His Word and His ways to the next generation (vv. 20-25).

II. THE ABSOLUTE AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURE

A. "AUTHORITY" DEFINED

1. Webster:

"The power or right to give commands, enforce obedience, take action, or make final decisions; jurisdiction."

2. Obviously we have many authorities in our lives.

(E.g., parents, teachers, spouses, government officials, police.)

3. Our church is subject to many authorities as well, but in the final analysis, Scripture must be the supreme authority.

a. Who or what determines our priorities and pursuits? If it is anything less than Scripture, we have missed the mark.

b. We must avoid the error of those described in Titus 1:16:

"The profess to know God, but by their deeds they deny Him, being detestable and disobedient, and worthless for any good deed."

B. OUR VIEW OF SCRIPTURE BEGINS WITH WHAT WE SAY WE BELIEVE.

Usually that is found in our formal statement of faith.

C. BUT MORE IMPORTANTLY, IT IS EVIDENCED BY WHAT WE DO.

1. James 1:19-25

"This you know, my beloved brethren. But let everyone be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger; for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God.

“Therefore putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls.

“***But prove yourselves doers of the word***, and not merely hearers who delude themselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was.

“But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, ***not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer***, this man shall be blessed in what he does.”

2. **Summary:**

a. Receive the Word! - vv. 19-21

- 1) Receive it with a submissive heart.
 - a) By being quick to hear!
 - b) By being slow to speak!
 - c) By being slow to anger!
- 2) Receive it with a pure heart.
- 3) Receive it with a humble heart.

b. Obey the Word! - vv. 22-25

- 1) Don't be a hearer only
 - a) Hearers are deluded - v. 22
 - b) Hearers are forgetful - vv. 23-25
- 2) Be a doer
 - a) Doers obey the Word - v. 22
 - b) Doers linger over the Word - v. 25
 - c) Doers abide in the Word - v. 25
 - d) Doers are effective - v. 25
 - e) Doers are blessed - v. 25

D. SCRIPTURE ISN'T OPTIONAL!

When I teach you something from Scripture, or when you learn it from your own study, you are accountable to God for application of what you've learned.

III. DOCTRINAL PURITY

A. DOCTRINAL PURITY IS CLOSELY RELATED TO THE AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURE.

B. DOCTRINAL PURITY IS NOT SYNONYMOUS WITH GOSPEL INTEGRITY.

1. The difference is significant.

Two of my deep concerns are the church's growing intolerance for sound doctrine, and its attempts to isolate the gospel from other doctrine.

2. Many teachers today say that the gospel is all that matters, and that doctrinal precision simply divides the Body of Christ. But that simply isn't true.

a. Listen again to the "Great Commission."

Matt. 28:18-20 - Jesus said, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

- The Great Commission assumes evangelism, and admonishes the teaching of ***everything*** that Christ taught.
- If the gospel were the only issue, the Great Commission would ***stop*** at evangelism, but it ***begins*** there.
- We cannot isolate the gospel from the rest of biblical teaching without dismissing out of hand all the imperatives of Scripture, thereby destroying the primary intent of the gospel itself: to glorify God by restoring fallen man to holiness.

- b. Also, listen to Paul's instructions to Elders in Titus 1:9-14

Elders are to be "holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, that [they] may be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict.

"For there are many rebellious men, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, who must be silenced because they are upsetting whole families, teaching things they should not teach, for the sake of sordid gain. One of themselves, a prophet of their own, said, 'Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons.' This testimony is true. For this cause reprove them severely that they may be sound in the faith, not paying attention to Jewish myths and commandments of men who turn away from the truth."

It is the responsibility of church leaders to teach and defend sound doctrine. To ignore it in an attempt to make the gospel more appealing is a gross violation of their calling.

3. *What is the tool for training believers in sound doctrine?*

1 Tim. 3:16-17 - "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work."

- a. That's why we must have a high view of Scripture: yielding to it as the absolute authority in our church and individual lives.
- b. That's why I cannot shirk my responsibility to teach you doctrine.

I must strive to make it as clear and applicable as possible, but I cannot stop teaching it. Too many Christians today fail to recognize that priority and therefore miss the opportunity to become disciplined students of the Word. They are content with the gospel only, and don't feel the need to progress further in their grasp of Scripture. If we do not reverse that trend, we will pay an even heavier price in years to come.

4. *I realize that doctrine in its broader sense can seem difficult and somewhat intimidating.*

- It requires diligent study and disciplined thought.
- It requires the willingness to apply Scripture to our lives.
- It checks us at every point of thought and behavior.
- It is very demanding.

But the rewards are rich: spiritual maturity and a more intimate walk with God.

5. *We mustn't make the mistake of relegating sound doctrine to seminaries and Bible schools. Scripture doesn't allow that, nor should we.*

IV. PERSONAL HOLINESS

A. THIS IS THE POINT OF PERSONAL APPLICATION

1. *This is the response level--the goal of Scripture and doctrine.*

2. *This is where a high view of God, the authority of Scripture, and doctrinal purity come together to produce the church body that God intended us to be.*

3. *This is where James 1:22 is worked out in our lives:*

“Prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves.”

4. *This is also where Matthew 7:24-27 is worked out in our lives:*

Jesus said, “Everyone who hears these words of Mine, and acts upon them, may be compared to a wise man, who built his house upon the rock. And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and burst against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded upon the rock.

“And everyone who hears these words of Mine, and does not act upon them, will be like a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand. And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and burst against that house; and it fell, and great was its fall.”

That's the spiritual parallel to our superstructure analogy.

B. WHAT IS PERSONAL HOLINESS?

1. *We have studied this in great detail in the past (a 6-tape series and syllabus is available).*
2. *Let me remind you of some key thoughts:*

BIBLICAL HOLINESS

INTRODUCTION:

1. *Even a cursory reading of the Bible reveals the priority of true holiness.*

There are 653 verses in the New American Standard text that speak of holiness (listed under “holy, holiness, holier, holies, sanctify, sanctification, sanctified, sanctifies, sanctifier, sanctifying”).

2. *Theologian W. E. Sangster summarizes:*

“All through the Word of God exhortations to holiness appear. They are not sporadic, occasional, or tempered by doubt concerning God’s ability to do this thing in us. Underlying them all is the confidence that God can do something more with our sins than forgive them.”

3. *Some examples:*

Lev. 21:44-45 - “I am the Lord your God. Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy; for I am holy. . . . For I am the Lord, who brought you up from the land of Egypt, to be your God; thus you shall be holy for I am holy.”

Luke 1:72-75 - “Remember [God’s] holy covenant, the oath which He swore to Abraham our father, to grant us that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him all our days.”

2 Cor. 7:1 - “Having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.”

Heb. 12:14 - “Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord.”

1 Pet. 1:13-16 - “Gird your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, but like the Holy One who

called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; because it is written, ‘You shall be holy, for I am Holy.’”

2 Pet. 3:10-11 - “The day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up. Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness.”

I. THE DEFINITION OF HOLINESS

A. ITS GREEK ROOT

Hagiasmos = “to Make Holy” or “to Sanctify.”

B. ITS TWOFOLD TRANSLATION

1. *Hagiasmos* is translated “holiness.”
2. *Hagiasmos* is also translated “Sanctification.”

C. ITS TWOFOLD CONNOTATION

1. *Objectively, hagiasmos means to be set apart (also known as positional holiness).*
 - a. In a negative sense it means to be set apart from sin.
 - b. In a positive sense it means to be set apart unto God.
2. *Subjectively, hagiasmos means to be cleansed inwardly (also known as practical holiness).*
 - a. In a negative sense, it means to be purged from sin.
 - b. In a positive sense, it means to be refined, regenerated, renewed in mind and soul.

II. THE THREE “Ps” OF HOLINESS

Scripture teaches three distinct aspects of Christian holiness: **P**ositional, **P**ractical, and **P**erfected.

A. POSITIONAL HOLINESS

1. *The explanation*

Positional holiness results from our position or standing in Christ. Because we belong to Him, God sees us as perfectly holy.

2. *The basis*

- a. Believers are positionally holy because Christ's righteousness is imputed to them.

Imputation is a theological term borrowed from accounting. It means that Christ's holiness is credited to our account, and our sin is credited to His.

- b. Positional holiness isn't based on our inward holiness of heart. It results from our identity with Christ at the moment of our salvation.

2 Cor. 5:21 - "He [God] made Him [Christ] who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."

- Christ exchanged His righteousness for our unrighteous-ness!

Acts 26:15-18 - Paul's commission by Christ was "to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, in order that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in [Christ]."

- Notice that a believer's sanctification is stated in the past tense.

- c. Our positional holiness is a person: Christ.

1 Cor. 1:30 - "By His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption."

3. *The extent*

- a. Positional holiness extends to every believer.

Heb. 10:10-14 - "By this will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. And every priest stands daily ministering and offering time after time the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins; but He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand

of God, waiting from that time onward until His enemies be made a footstool for His feet. For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified.”

b. Christ’s perfect offering has already perfected (in the positional sense) those who are in the process of being made holy (sanctified).

- **1 Cor. 1:1-2** - “Paul, called as an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother, to the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints by calling, with all who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

c. Everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord is a sanctified saint!

d. Paul assured the Corinthians that they were sanctified saints, but notice what he says in 1 Cor. 3:1-3 and 16:

“I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of flesh, as to babes in Christ. I gave you milk to drink not solid food; for you were not yet able to receive it. Indeed, even now you are not yet able, for you are still fleshly. For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men? . . . Do you not know that you are a temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?”

e. How can we reconcile the idea of sinful believers with sanctified, Spirit-indwelt saints? The answer lies in the difference between positional and practical sanctification. They were holy in position (because they belonged to Christ), but not yet in practice.

B. PRACTICAL HOLINESS

Positional holiness is the result of what Christ did for us on the cross; Practical Holiness is the result of what the Holy Spirit does in us.

As our minds grasp the truth that we are already sanctified in the sight of God, our hearts should rejoice and long for that sweet communion with God that results from a practical, inward holiness of heart. We should long to be more like Him!

1. ***Practical holiness is initiated by God.***

- a. He takes the initiative

1 Thess. 3:12-13 - “May the Lord cause you to increase and abound in love for one another, and for all men, just as we also do for you; so that He may establish your hearts unblamable in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints.”

1 Thess. 5:23 - “May the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

- b. He grants the resources in Christ

Phil. 2:13 - “It is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.”

2 Pet. 1:2-4 - “Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord; seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, in order that by them you might become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.”

- c. He does the transforming

Rom. 12:2 - “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.”

2 Cor. 3:18 - We all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed [passive tense] into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.”

2. ***Practical holiness is to be the pursuit of every believer.***

- a. **Phil. 2:13** - “It is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.”

However, verse 12 gives the balance: “Work out your own salvation.”

- b. **2 Pet. 1:2-4** - We have all things pertaining to life and godliness.

However, verses 5-7 give the balance: *We* supply diligence, moral excellence, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love!

- c. **Rom. 12:2** - “Be transformed by the renewing of your mind.”

However, verse 1 gives the balance: “Present yourselves as living sacrifices [continually].”

In Rom. 6:11ff Paul adds, “Consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body that you should obey its lusts, and do not go on presenting the members of your body as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.

“For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law, but under grace. . . . For just as you presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness, resulting in further lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification.”

- d. **2 Cor. 3:18** - “We all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.”

However, we must behold the glory of the Lord. How do we do that? What is the mirror into which we look? It is God’s Word. We must expose ourselves to the Word! (James uses the same word picture).

- e. One theologian explained the balance this way:

“It is . . . the duty of the sanctified to cultivate the Christian graces they receive from God. This is a necessary part of their dedication to holy character. These exhortations do not diminish in any way the doctrine that these graces have their origin in God; nor does the truth that they are God’s gift cancel the need

for a man so to co-operate that these graces will have full expression in his life” (*The Salvation Army Handbook of Doctrine*, pp. 160-61).

3. *Practical holiness is a matter of the heart.*

- a. It is not found merely by conforming to an external code of conduct.
- b. It is not moral virtue only.
- c. It is not religious traditions.
- d. It is not restraining sin for fear of its consequences.
- e. It is not restraining sin to avoid a guilty conscience.
- f. It is the fruit of loving Christ and obeying His Word.

4. *A Spiritual Checklist:*

If you are being sanctified you will:

- a. See spiritual progress in your life.
- b. Sense the Holy Spirit working in your life.
- c. Have a strong antipathy toward sin.
- d. Seek to serve God out of love.
- e. Demonstrate a spiritually disciplined life.
- f. Love God’s Word.
- g. Associate with holy people.

C. *PERFECTED HOLINESS*

1. *The explanation*

Perfected Holiness has to do with our final state. When we are finally glorified and in the presence of Christ, we will be perfectly holy.

2. *The examples*

- a. **1 John 3:2** - “Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him,

because we shall see Him just as He is. And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.”

- b. ***Phil. 3:20-21*** - “Our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.”

Now we return to our study of “Examining the Superstructure of the Church.” We’ve already seen the importance of:

- I. A HIGH VIEW OF GOD***
- II. THE ABSOLUTE AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURE***
- III. DOCTRINAL PURITY***
- IV. PERSONAL HOLINESS***

Our final non-negotiable truth is:

V. SPIRITUAL AUTHORITY

A. GOD HAS DESIGNED HIS CHURCH TO FUNCTION WITHIN THE PARAMETERS OF AUTHORITY AND SUBMISSION.

I’ll simply touch on this topic here because we’ve explored it in detail in our six-part series: “Spiritual Body Building.”

B. CHURCH LEADERS HAVE DELEGATED AUTHORITY WITHIN THE FLOCK.

- 1. ***That’s why Scripture says, “Obey your leaders, and submit to them” (Heb. 13:17a).***

- 2. ***The counter-balance is:***

- a. ***Heb. 13:17b*** - “For they keep watch over your souls, as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you.”

- b. ***1 Pet. 5:1-4***

“I exhort the elders among you, as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker

also of the glory that is to be revealed, shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.”

3. ***To the degree that your leaders represent biblical truth, you are to submit to them.***
 - a. That doesn't mean they'll always make the right decisions, but it does mean they're responsible for leading you in the right way.
 - b. And every man among you who desires to be an Elder or Deacon should consider carefully the weight of responsibility you pursue.
4. ***On the other end of the spectrum, sometimes I am deeply concerned for flock members who seem to find it easy to disregard spiritual counsel.***

If they disagree with a decision or admonition, they're quick to criticize, usurp, and/or leave the church. That should not be.

Unless they clearly violate Scripture, leaders

5. ***God has built mutual responsibility and accountability into His church as a safeguard for shepherds and sheep alike. No one should forsake that safeguard without careful and prayerful thought.***

C. AN OVERVIEW OF GOD'S PLAN FOR HIS CHURCH

(See our study of Ephesians 4:11-16 titled “Spiritual Bodybuilding.”)