

The authority of the Church of Christ.

By George Fox

The apostle said to the Corinthians, 'I told you before, and foretell you, as if I were present, now I write to them which heretofore have sinned, and to all others, if I come I will not spare.' 2 Cor 13:2.

Here the apostle used his authority in the power and spirit of Christ, who would not spare sin and sinners.

And John said, 'That I wrote unto the Church, but Diotrephes, who loves to have the pre-eminence among them, did not receive us; therefore if I come, I will remember his deeds, which he does gossiping against us with malicious words,' 3 John 3:9-10. And so John thought of this Diotrephes in the power of God, and had authority in his power to judge such gossiping puffed up Diotrephes's, and their malicious words; and so has the church of Christ in his power to judge such now. 'And therefore, my beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good; for he that does good, is of God, and he that does evil, has not seen God.' Here is the true judgment of a true watchman in the power and spirit of Christ. As many as receive Christ, to them he gives power to become the sons of God, which were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God; these had power from Christ to admonish, reprove, and rebuke such as went out from the will of God, into sin and evil. And the apostle said, 'Though I should boast somewhat more of our authority, which the Lord has given us for edification, and not for your destruction.' So here the apostles had authority, which the Lord had given them, for the edification of the church, to keep them out of destruction.

And the apostle said to the church of Corinth, 'I fear lest when I come I shall not find you as I would, and that I shall be found unto you such as you would not, lest there be debates, envying, wrath, strifes, etc., and lest when I come again, my God will humble me among you, and I should bewail many which have sinned already, and have not repented of your uncleanness, fornication, and lasciviousness, which you have committed. I write these things being absent, lest being present I should use sharpness, according to the power which the Lord has given me to edification, and not to destruction.' Here you see the authority and power from the Lord the apostles had to judge such as these, for the edification of those who profess christianity, not for their destruction. And the

apostle said, 'For to this end also did I write, that I might know the truth of you, whether you are obedient in all things; to whom you forgave anything, I forgave it for your sakes in the person of Christ.' 2 Cor 2:9-10.

So here you may see where there was an obedience to the truth, there was a forgiveness in Christ. And the apostle said, 'For verily, as absent in the body but present in the spirit, I have judged already, as though I was present, concerning him that has done this deed; in the name of the Lord Jesus, when you are gathered together, and my spirit with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, to deliver such a one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh. Know you not, a little leaven leavens the whole lump; purge out therefore the old leaven, that you may be a new lump.' 1 Cor 5:3-6.

Here you see the apostle and the church of Christ had power and authority from Christ to cast out, and to purge out that which is evil, or the old leaven, out of the church of Christ, that they may be a new lump; for the apostle said, 'He would shortly come to the church of the Corinthians, if the Lord will, and I will not know the speech of them which are puffed up, but the power; for the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power.' So here the apostle, in his authority in the power of Christ, would know the power of Christ in others, and would have the church of Christ to do the same; for the apostle said, 'Do you not know that the saints shall judge the world.'

So the sanctified, which are made holy, judge the unholy world. And again, 'Know you not that you shall judge angels.' Angels are spirits; those who keep their habitation in the truth, and are in the spirit of Christ, judge the angels, and spirits that are fallen from the truth, and their habitation in the truth; yes, I say the devil and his angels, in whom is no truth; those who walk in truth, and live in the power and spirit of Jesus does judge such. Therefore it was a shame to the church of Christ, who had this power, to go to the courts against one another before the unbelieving world, whom they had power to judge, and not to set up the least in the church to judge of outward things pertaining to this life, seeing they had the power to judge of greater matters.

So here you may see the church of Christ has power from Christ to judge the angels, to judge the world, and to judge in outward matters of things that pertain to this life. 1 Cor 6:2-7.

Site Editor's Postscript: Many people think all judging is wrong, because of Christ's command: Judge not, that ye be not judged. Mat 7:1. We are never supposed to judge someone else with our carnal minds, for we cannot see the spec in our brother's eye, as long as the log is in ours. But when you are completely trained and perfected, like the One Teacher is, then you can clearly see how to remove the spec from you brother's eye - then you have spiritual

discernment and God doing the judging through you, not your carnal mind, which is to be replaced by the mind of Christ, being conformed to the image of his Son.

While being perfected by Christ and grace, we each have a series of troublesome faults, which we must tolerate in each other and overlook. You may clearly see a fault, but it may not be possible for that person to repent of that fault, until he has repented of several others before; and only the Lord knows the sequence that will be successful with each one of us. So, in the flesh, we cannot judge anyone's faults of whom we associate. But in a true church of Christ, there will be a leadership, whose job it is to help, as directed by the Spirit, in judging behaviors which the Spirit wishes to correct.

Concerning Exhortation and Admonition.

Concerning exhortation, Judas and Silas, exhorted the brethren with many words, and comforted them. Acts 15. And the apostle confirmed the souls of the disciples, and exhorted them to continue in the faith, and that we must through many tribulations enter into the kingdom of God; when he had ordained them elders in every church, they commended them to the Lord, whom they believed. Acts 14. So you may see here were elders ordained in every church; and the aged women are commended as well as the men, as in Titus 2:3-5. And Barnabas exhorted the church of Antioch, yes, he exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord. Acts 11.

And the brethren wrote, exhorting to receive Apollos, who when he was come into Achaiah, helped them much who had believed through grace. Here you may see it was the practice of the church of Christ to exhort, and did help them which believed through grace. Acts 18:24-28. And you may see in Acts 20, how the apostle had given the church of Macedonia much exhortation, and this exhortation was in the spirit and power of Christ; for Christ gave to his disciples power and authority over all devils, Luke 9:1.

And the apostles exhorted the Thessalonians to exhort theirs' 2 Thes 3:10-11, 4:1, and said, 'We beseech you brethren, and exhort you by the name of the Lord Jesus, that as you have received of us, how you ought to walk and please God.' And said, moreover, 'You know how that we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, ... that you walk worthy of God, who has called you unto his kingdom and glory. 1 Thes 2:11-12. Therefore comfort yourselves together, and exhort and edify one another, even as you also do. And we exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly, and comfort the feeble minded, and support the weak, and be patient towards all men.' 1 Thes 5:11-14. Here you may see the church has authority, both to support, and comfort, and exhort, and warn the unruly.

And you may see how the apostles did command and exhort such as walk disorderly, in 2 Thes 3:10-11. And the apostle did exhort, saying, 'Save yourselves from this untoward generation.' Acts 20:40. And the apostle exhorted the mariners that were in the ship, 'Be of good cheer, for there shall be no loss of any man's life; I believe in God, and that it shall be even as it was told me,' namely, by the Lord. Acts 27. And the apostle said to Timothy, 'Give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine; neglect not the gift that is in you;' and told Timothy, teach and exhort, and to be an example to the believers in word, conduct, faith, love, and purity. 1 Tim 6:2,4:11-12 .

And the apostle exhorts Timothy, 'Preach the word in season, and out of season, reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine. The time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but turn their ears away from the truth, and heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears.' 2 Tim 4:2-3. And therefore you see the church's authority to exhort, rebuke, and reprove such. But the apostle said to Timothy, 'Do not rebuke an elder, but exhort him as a father, and the elder women as mothers,' 1 Tim 5:1-2.

And the apostle said to Titus 2, 'Exhort, rebuke, with all authority, and exhort servants to be obedient to their own masters, that they may adorn the doctrine of God in all things.' And the apostle exhorted Titus, to 'set in order the things that are wanting in Crete, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed you.' And they were to be such as were able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort, and convince those who contradict. And the apostle exhorted Titus, 'to rebuke sharply the unruly, and vain talkers and deceivers.' Tit 1:10-13. And Titus received the apostle's exhortation, when they sent him to the Corinthians. 2 Cor 8:16-17. And the apostle said, 'A man that is a divisive, after the first and second admonition, reject. Tit 3:10.'

And the apostle said, 'Let us consider one another, to provoke one another unto good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the day approach,' namely, of Christ Jesus. Heb 10:24-25. And the apostle said, 'I beseech you brethren, allow me the word of exhortation to you,' Heb 13:22. And the apostle said to the Colossians, 'Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another,' Col 3:16. So here you may see the church of Christ, from his word dwelling in them, were able to teach and admonish one another from the word of wisdom in them. So it seems then, they did not set a priest over them, that he might be always teaching them, and they might be always paying him. And the apostle said to the Romans, Rom 15:14. 'I myself also am persuaded of you my brethren, that you are full of goodness, and filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another.'

So here you may see the church of the Romans were able to admonish one another then, without setting up of colleges to make priests to admonish them; and therefore, as the apostle said in Phil 2:15, 'that you may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life.' And the apostle said, 'I have sent Tychicus unto you, (the Ephesians), that he might know your affairs, and might comfort your hearts.' Eph 6:21. Here the churches knew, and made known the affairs one unto another in the Lord.

And Jude exhorted the church in his General Epistle, that they should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered to the saints or sanctified ones, which faith Christ is the author and finisher of. And now, had all Christendom contended for this faith or belief, then they would not have made so many faiths or beliefs to kill and destroy one another about, had they kept in Christ's saving faith, which saves and does not destroy, and with that shield of faith you do not war with flesh and blood to destroy it.

And the Lord sent Jeremiah to admonish the children of Israel, that they should not go into Egypt; but they disobeyed the word of the Lord unto Jeremiah, and went into Egypt; therefore Jeremiah told them, 'they should die in the land of Egypt, and should be consumed.' Jer 42:16,44:12. Here you may see what became of those who disobeyed the admonishment of the Lord and his prophet; and therefore Solomon said, 'Better is a poor and a wise child, than an old and foolish king, who will no more be admonished, or knows not to be admonished.' Eccl 4:13. And Solomon said, 'The words of the wise are like prodding goads, and firmly fixed [in the mind] like nails are the collected sayings which are given [as proceeding] from one Shepherd.' Ecc 12:11. So it is good for all to receive the exhortations and admonishments from the power and spirit of Christ. And Christ told John to write unto the church of Thyatira, 'that he had a few things against them, because they allowed Jezebel to teach,' Rev 2:20. And so you may see this church came under reproof, because they did not make use of their power and authority, in the spirit of Christ to judge Jezebel's spirit; and therefore the church of Christ now, is not to allow Jezebel's spirit, or they come under the same reproof, if they allow that Jezebel's spirit to teach, now as then. And here you may see how that Christ has given his church power and authority in his holy spirit to admonish, exhort, judge, reprove, and rebuke in his power and spirit.

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