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## **DESIRE FOR POWER, FAME, STATUS, RECOGNITION (S): POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE EXAMPLES FROM THE SCRIPTURES**

In the last message, we considered the subject of power, authority, status, prestige, glory, recognition. Today, I wish to carry on with the same subject and consider with you some examples in the Scriptures—both positive and negative—and draw from them principles that are relevant to us.

### **Positive example—Daniel**

A very good positive example in the Scriptures is Daniel. Daniel is outstanding in his faithfulness to God. From early youth, he sought to honour God even though it could have cost him his life. Daniel's approach was an active submission to the will of God, not a passive desire of not doing anything wrong.

Daniel did not seek power, authority, status and recognition. Yet he is an outstanding example of one who attained much in these areas. He was willing and able to shoulder his responsibilities properly and in a manner honouring to God.

After he came into power, he continued to maintain a healthy spirit. This is not easy. Some people may start out right with God, but degenerate when they come into power. And they may cling on to power even when it is time for them to relinquish it. This was not the case with Daniel. He was prepared to accept a position of responsibility that God desired of him, and he was prepared to relinquish it at any time. We see an example of this in Daniel 6.

This took place during the reign of King Darius. Daniel was one of three commissioners (v. 2). He distinguished himself—not by fleshly means or by trying to project himself—but because the king recognised that Daniel possessed an extraordinary spirit (v. 3). It was the Holy Spirit at work in Daniel's life.

The king was planning to appoint Daniel to a high position in his kingdom. But the other commissioners and satraps were jealous and tried to level false accusations against Daniel. They tried to find grounds of accusation but failed because Daniel was faithful and there was no negligence in him (v. 4). His enemies concluded in verse 5:

#### **Daniel 6:5**

"We will not find any ground of accusation against this Daniel unless we find it against him with regard to the law of his God."

This is a very striking testimony. Even his enemies couldn't find negligence, corruption or anything improper in his conduct.

One day, his colleagues laid a trap for him by asking the king to pass a statute that requires all to make petitions to the king but not to any god or man. Anyone found breaking this statute would be cast into the lions' den (v. 7). Although Daniel knew about this statute, he continued to pray and give thanks to God as he had been doing previously (v. 10).

To Daniel, it was most important to remain faithful to God and so he conducted himself in the way he understood God desired of him, even if it meant being stripped of power and authority and being thrown into the lions' den. But the Lord delivered Daniel from the lions' mouths because he was innocent and faithful, and because God deeply appreciated him. Daniel testified of God's goodness when King Darius came before the lions' den to find out if he was still alive.

#### **Daniel 6:21-22**

21 Then Daniel spoke to the king, "O king, live forever!

22 "My God sent His angel and shut the lions' mouths and they have not harmed me, inasmuch as I was found innocent before Him; and also toward you, O king, I have committed no crime."

We see another illustration of Daniel's healthy attitude regarding authority, power, status and recognition in Daniel 2:26-30. King Nebuchadnezzar was disturbed by a dream. His officials were unable to make known to him the dream and its interpretation. When Daniel was brought before him, King Nebuchadnezzar asked him:

#### **Daniel 2:26**

"Are you able to make known to me the dream which I have seen and its interpretation?"

God had marvellously made known to Daniel the dream and its interpretation. But Daniel did not exploit the situation by using it to exalt himself and impress the king. He did not say, "I can make it known to you." Many in his shoes would have replied the king in that way. In fact, he did the opposite.

#### **Daniel 2:27**

Daniel answered before the king and said, "As for the mystery about which the king has inquired, neither wise men, conjurers, magicians nor diviners are able to declare it to the king.

Daniel made it clear to Nebuchadnezzar that men would not be able to know and interpret the dream, but there is a "God in heaven" who reveals mysteries (v. 28). He drew attention to God rather than to himself.

**Daniel 2:28-30**

28 ...there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries, and He has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar...

29 "As for you, O king, while on your bed your thoughts turned to what would take place in the future; and He who reveals mysteries has made known to you what will take place.

30 "But as for me, this mystery has not been revealed to me for any wisdom residing in me more than in any other living man, but for the purpose of making the interpretation known to the king, and that you may understand the thoughts of your mind.

Daniel's concern was to fulfil what he believed God wanted him to do in the situation—to make known to Nebuchadnezzar the meaning of the dream and to exalt the Lord. He also made it clear that this mystery had not been revealed to him because of any wisdom in him (v. 30).

If given such a revelation from God, many would consider themselves to be somebody special. They would be tempted to draw attention to themselves. This did not happen to Daniel. There was no trace of self-exaltation or pride in him.

**Negative example—King Saul**

As a contrast to Daniel's response, let us refer to King Saul when he was king. I considered with you the life of Saul in detail in two messages G10 and G11. I will summarise here some aspects relevant to the subject we are considering.

Before Saul became king, there were indications of positive attitudes within him. God chose him to be king over Israel. At that time, he was not seeking power. In fact, he was hiding among the baggage when Samuel was sent to anoint him as king (1 Sam. 10:17-24). But after coming to power, he failed the Lord in his exercise of leadership. Samuel made clear to him that God no longer wanted him to remain as king and had instead raised David to replace him. But King Saul clung on to the kingship contrary to the will of God. He ended up opposing God and the outworking of His purposes. The basic problem was his unwillingness to relinquish power, status and authority. He was unwilling to let go even when it became clear it was no longer God's will for him to remain as king.

He relentlessly persecuted David and sought to kill him. In the process, his inner man degenerated. The forces of darkness had freedom to work in and through his life and he incurred the severe judgement of God and died a tragic death.

Saul's clinging on to power also had significant adverse effects on others. For example, he ordered the killing of the priests and the destruction of the city of Nob (1 Sam. 22).

**Negative example—Jeroboam**

Jeroboam is another negative example of one who clung on to power, resulting in negative consequences for himself, his family, his descendants and also for the nation of Israel. There are some similarities between King Saul and King Jeroboam.

Like Saul, it was God's will that Jeroboam became king. God gave Jeroboam the ten tribes of Israel because of the sins and failures of King Solomon. Jeroboam did not reach out for that position. It was the Lord who communicated His will to Jeroboam through the prophet Ahijah.

1 Kings 11:1-13 gives an account of King Solomon's degeneration and the Lord's decision to appoint Jeroboam as king over the ten tribes of Israel.

Jeroboam was a valiant warrior in Solomon's army and Solomon himself appointed him over the forced labour. Jeroboam was also industrious (1 Kings 11:28).

One day, God directed Ahijah to Jeroboam to announce God's plan for him.

**1 Kings 11:30-31**

30 Then Ahijah took hold of the new cloak which was on him and tore it into twelve pieces.

31 He said to Jeroboam, "Take for yourself ten pieces; for thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, 'Behold, I will tear the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon and give you ten tribes

**1 Kings 11:37-38**

37 'I will take you, and you shall reign over whatever you desire, and you shall be king over Israel.

38 'Then it will be, that if you listen to all that I command you and walk in My ways, and do what is right in My sight by observing My statutes and My commandments, as My servant David did, then I will be with you and build you an enduring house as I built for David, and I will give Israel to you.

God had a long-term plan for Jeroboam—to build "an enduring house" for him just as He did for David (v. 38). But God also laid down His condition: Jeroboam was to be obedient and faithful to the Lord.

But, as it turned out, Jeroboam was unfaithful. He was disobedient and sinned grievously against the Lord. 1 Kings 12 describes some of the things he did.

**1 Kings 12:25-27**

25 Then Jeroboam built Shechem in the hill country of Ephraim, and lived there. And he went out from there and built Penuel.

26 Jeroboam said in his heart, "Now the kingdom will return to the house of David.

27 "If this people go up to offer sacrifices in the house of the Lord at Jerusalem, then the heart of this people will return to their lord, even to Rehoboam king of Judah; and they will kill me and return to Rehoboam king of Judah."

Jeroboam felt insecure as a king. He feared that if the people of Israel were to go up to offer sacrifices in the house of the Lord at Jerusalem, their loyalty may then revert to Rehoboam. Jeroboam would then lose the kingdom to the house of David. He may even lose his life. Because of these considerations, Jeroboam instituted a system of false worship.

### **1 Kings 12:28-33**

28 So the king consulted, and made two golden calves, and he said to them, "It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem; behold your gods, O Israel, that brought you up from the land of Egypt."

29 He set one in Bethel, and the other he put in Dan [in Israel].

30 Now this thing became a sin, for the people went to worship before the one as far as Dan.

31 And he made houses on high places, and made priests from among all the people who were not of the sons of Levi.

32 Jeroboam instituted a feast in the eighth month on the fifteenth day of the month, like the feast which is in Judah, and he went up to the altar; thus he did in Bethel, sacrificing to the calves which he had made. And he stationed in Bethel the priests of the high places which he had made.

33 Then he went up to the altar which he had made in Bethel on the fifteenth day in the eighth month, even in the month which he had devised in his own heart; and he instituted a feast for the sons of Israel and went up to the altar to burn incense.

Once he moved in the wrong direction, it grew and developed into a whole system of false worship. First, Jeroboam set up false gods. He made two golden calves and set up one in Bethel and the other in Dan (vs. 28-29). Next, he made priests of those who were not of the sons of Levi (v. 31). This was contrary to the instructions of God. He then instituted a feast in place of the feast that God had instituted, and sacrificed to the golden calves in the midst of the feast (vs. 32-33).

God gave Jeroboam opportunities to repent, just like He did for Saul. One day, while Jeroboam was standing by the altar at Bethel to burn incense, the Lord sent a prophet to prophesy against Jeroboam's evil deeds.

### **1 Kings 13:2-3**

2 ... "O altar, altar, thus says the Lord, 'Behold, a son shall be born to the house of David, Josiah by name; and on you he shall sacrifice the

priests of the high places who burn incense on you, and human bones shall be burned on you.' ”

3 Then he gave a sign the same day, saying, “This is the sign which the Lord has spoken, ‘Behold, the altar shall be split apart and the ashes which are on it shall be poured out.’ ”

But instead of repenting, Jeroboam ordered his men to seize the prophet.

#### **1 Kings 13:4-5**

4 Now when the king heard the saying of the man of God, which he cried against the altar in Bethel, Jeroboam stretched out his hand from the altar, saying, “Seize him.” But his hand which he stretched out against him dried up, so that he could not draw it back to himself.

5 The altar also was split apart and the ashes were poured out from the altar, according to the sign which the man of God had given by the word of the Lord.

God’s judgement struck immediately. Jeroboam’s outstretched hand dried up and he could not draw it back. God also broke the altar into two. Jeroboam then pleaded for his hand to be restored, which God in His mercy did.

#### **1 Kings 13:6**

The king said to the man of God, “Please entreat the Lord your God, and pray for me, that my hand may be restored to me.” So the man of God entreated the Lord, and the king’s hand was restored to him, and it became as it was before.

Jeroboam was only concerned about having his hand restored. He was not repentant and he did not take corrective measures.

If, like Jeroboam, we have failed the Lord and He allows our health to fail and difficulties to come our way, would we be preoccupied with regaining our health and having our difficulties removed? Would we neglect seeking the Lord and what He has to say to us and putting right our lives before Him?

Jeroboam had a truly remarkable experience. His withered hand was made whole. However, he was not at all appreciative of God's grace and mercy towards him and he was not repentant. All he could think of was to invite the man home to refresh himself and promised to reward him (v. 7). But the man of God rejected his offer because he had been instructed by the Lord against doing so (vs. 8-9).

Sadly, Jeroboam continued in his sins even after this remarkable incident in his life.

### **1 Kings 13:33-34**

33 After this event Jeroboam did not return from his evil way, but again he made priests of the high places from among all the people; any who would, he ordained, to be priests of the high places.

34 This event became sin to the house of Jeroboam, even to blot it out and destroy it from off the face of the earth.

1 Kings 14:1-16 records for us the terrible judgement of God on Jeroboam, his house and Israel. The unfolding of God's judgement began with Jeroboam's son Abijah falling sick. Jeroboam instructed his wife to go to Ahijah the prophet who had spoken to Jeroboam about God's will for him to become king. He told his wife to disguise herself. Although Ahijah could not see because of old age, the Lord told him that the wife of Jeroboam was coming and that she would pretend to be another woman. And so Ahijah told Jeroboam's wife:

### **1 Kings 14:6-11**

6 ..."Come in, wife of Jeroboam, why do you pretend to be another woman? For I am sent to you with a harsh message.

7 "Go, say to Jeroboam, 'Thus says the Lord God of Israel, "Because I exalted you from among the people and made you leader over My people Israel,

8 and tore the kingdom away from the house of David and gave it to you—yet you have not been like My servant David, who kept My commandments and who followed Me with all his heart, to do only that which was right in My sight;

9 you also have done more evil than all who were before you, and have gone and made for yourself other gods and molten images to provoke Me to anger, and have cast Me behind your back—

10 therefore behold, I am bringing calamity on the house of Jeroboam, and will cut off from Jeroboam every male person, both bond and free in Israel, and I will make a clean sweep of the house of Jeroboam, as one sweeps away dung until it is all gone.

11 "Anyone belonging to Jeroboam who dies in the city the dogs will eat. And he who dies in the field the birds of the heavens will eat; for the Lord has spoken it." '

### **1 Kings 14:14-16**

14 "Moreover, the Lord will raise up for Himself a king over Israel who will cut off the house of Jeroboam this day and from now on.

15 "For the Lord will strike Israel, as a reed is shaken in the water; and He will uproot Israel from this good land which He gave to their fathers, and will scatter them beyond the Euphrates River, because they have made their Asherim, provoking the Lord to anger.

16 "He will give up Israel on account of the sins of Jeroboam, which he committed and with which he made Israel to sin."

The Lord made it clear that judgement would come because of Jeroboam's terrible sins in introducing false worship, leading Israel to sin against God (vs. 9-11, 16).

God had a wonderful plan for Jeroboam. But, sadly, the plan did not materialise. Instead, Jeroboam and his descendants met with a tragic end. The underlying reason for Jeroboam's foolish actions was his fear that he would lose the kingdom. He did not want it to return to the house of David. Instead of being faithful and obedient to God and trusting God's promise to him of an enduring kingdom, Jeroboam took steps contrary to God's instructions in order to secure his kingdom.

Jeroboam's wrongful desire to hold on to power and authority resulted in serious wrongdoing. It meant turning away from worshipping the true God to worshipping false gods. The whole nation of Israel became ensnared by the system of false worship. Although the people of Israel were also responsible for participating in false worship, as the king, what Jeroboam did had tremendous negative influence on the people. They succumbed to Jeroboam's negative influence and went astray.

### **Spiritual pressures on people in positions of authority**

There are two important points to take note of concerning those in positions of power and authority. First, it is a serious responsibility for which the Lord would require an account. The gravity of the responsibility is related to the significance of the role. This position of power and authority is not for personal enjoyment or self-gratification.

Second, a person in a position of power and authority will experience more intense spiritual pressures and attacks. This is especially so if the responsibilities relate to the fulfilment of God's purposes. The more significant the role, the more intense will be the pressures and attacks. This we can readily understand because, as intelligent beings, the evil one and the forces of darkness will strategically attack God's work, and leaders will be one main target.

This principle applies to both King Saul and King Jeroboam. The seriousness of their spiritual degeneration is related to the spiritual attacks and pressures that came upon them in their roles as kings of Israel. Of course, it is also true that both of them had weaknesses which the evil one exploited.

The Book of Daniel reveals to us that powerful evil spirits are at work in nations and in the lives of rulers. Daniel 10 describes spiritual warfare involving powerful angels and evil spirits. Daniel had been coming before the Lord in prolonged prayer and mourning. In answer to his prayers, God sent an angel to explain to Daniel what had been happening in the spiritual realm.

The angel told Daniel he “had been left there with the kings of Persia”. He was hindered from coming to Daniel because “the prince of the kingdom of Persia” withstood him for twenty-one days. After his conversation with Daniel, he would return to fight against the prince of Persia and the prince of Greece (vs. 12-13, 20). The prince of Persia and the prince of Greece are two powerful evil spirits who exercise significant influence in these two nations and their rulers.

The angel then told Daniel that in his engagement with these two evil spirits, “there is no one who stands firmly with me against these forces except Michael your prince” (v. 21). Then in Daniel 11:1, the angel said:

**Daniel 11:1**

“In the first year of Darius the Mede, I arose to be an encouragement and a protection for him.

This account reveals that in the warfare raging in the spiritual realm, God’s angels had to fight against powerful evil forces. In that context, we see the powerful angel whom God sent to Daniel rising up to be an encouragement and a protection for Darius, a secular king.

As we reflect on the activities of the powers of darkness in the lives of those in positions of power and authority, we should not be surprised that there have been many tyrants in the history of the world. Their cruelty and the mass destruction that they perpetrated could very well be due to the significant working of the powers of darkness in their lives. Powerful evil spirits are at work in the lives of those in positions of responsibility because their lives and conduct affect many people.

**Praying for people in positions of authority**

When we understand the grave responsibilities that leaders shoulder, and the intense spiritual pressures that they come under, we will better appreciate why the Scriptures exhorts us to pray for and support those in positions of responsibilities, both those in secular positions and even more so, those doing the Lord’s work. We are to pray for them so that they may fulfil their responsibilities well.

Let us turn to 1 Timothy 2:1-8, an important passage about praying for those in authority.

**1 Timothy 2:1-8**

1 First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men,  
2 for kings and all who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity.  
3 This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior,  
4 who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

5 For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men,  
the man Christ Jesus,  
6 who gave Himself as a ransom for all, the testimony given at the  
proper time.  
7 For this I was appointed a preacher and an apostle (I am telling the  
truth, I am not lying) as a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth.  
8 Therefore I want the men in every place to pray, lifting up holy  
hands, without wrath and dissension.

Paul starts by saying: "First of all, I urge..." In saying this, he is drawing our attention to the importance of the subject he is about to address. He exhorts us to pray, first, for all men. Next he urges us to pray "for kings and all who are in authority" because when leaders fulfil their responsibilities well, "we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity".

In verse 3, Paul says that "this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour". Is verse 3 linked to the preceding two verses on Paul's exhortation to pray or to the verses that follow on God's desire for all men to be saved? It is linked to both. What is good and acceptable? It is prayer for all men and for those who are in authority, as this would facilitate the fulfilment of God's will for the salvation of all men. One main object of our prayer for all men should then be for their salvation. Likewise, when we pray for those in authority and for peace and tranquillity, it has to do with God's concern for the salvation of men. Having a condition of peace and tranquillity provides a conducive environment for people to work out their faith and live in godliness and dignity, and for the gospel to be preached.

In verse 7, Paul goes on to talk about his ministry. God had appointed him a preacher, apostle and teacher. He recognises that it is a heavy responsibility and that those with significant spiritual responsibilities like him need much prayer support to discharge their responsibilities well. He thus urges men in every place to pray, united in spirit (v. 8).

In Ephesians 6:18-21, Paul again addresses this subject of praying for brethren who have significant spiritual responsibilities. In the preceding verses, he dwells on the subject of spiritual warfare. He says that our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the forces of darkness. In the light of this, he highlights the importance and urgency of prayer.

### **Ephesians 6:18-21**

18 With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with  
this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all  
the saints,  
19 and pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the  
opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of  
the gospel,

20 for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in proclaiming it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.

21 But that you also may know about my circumstances, how I am doing, Tychicus, the beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, will make everything known to you.

In verse 18, Paul urges the believers to pray with perseverance for all the saints. In the next verse, he asks them to specifically “pray on my behalf”. He highlights this need for prayer support because he senses the gravity of the responsibility God has entrusted to him and he desires to discharge this responsibility effectively.

Verse 21 indicates Paul's desire that the Ephesians know about his circumstances. This would enable them to pray more definitely and effectively for him, bearing in mind his specific circumstances and needs.

We cannot take for granted that those called to minister will preach effectively and wholesomely all the time. They need prayer support so that they could, as Paul says, “speak as I ought to speak”, and to do so with boldness, power and effectiveness.

#### *Proper response to spiritual leadership*

Hebrews 13:17-18 also speaks on the subject of how believers ought to regard and respond to those whom the Lord has appointed to shoulder spiritual leadership responsibilities.

#### **Hebrews 13:17-18**

17 Obey your leaders and submit to them, 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.

18 Pray for us, for we are sure that we have a good conscience, desiring to conduct ourselves honorably in all things.

The writer to the Hebrews begins with “obey your leaders and submit to them” in verse 17. This exhortation to obey and submit to leaders is not optional. It is not as and when we feel like it. These are clear instructions of the Lord.

Those in positions of responsibility have to keep watch over the souls of those under them, and they have to give an account of their service to the Lord. Therefore, they have to serve responsibly.

The writer goes on to urge the believers to respond in such a way that their leaders could serve “with joy and not with grief”. In the NASB margin, “with grief” literally means groaning. There are some contexts where those being watched over make things so difficult for their leaders that they cause them to labour with groaning.

Note the unexpected twist in the last part of verse 17, where the writer says: “for this would be unprofitable for you”. If we do not cooperate with our leaders, it may cause them to labour with groaning, and that would be to our own detriment. They keep watch over our souls. Thus, we ought to support them, pray for them, and cooperate with them, so that they can fulfil their responsibilities well and with joy. When God appoints them as leaders, He has in mind our welfare. When we cooperate with them, the Lord’s work can go on well and the outcome will be well-being for God’s people.

### **Peter—Example of proper attitude in serving God**

Let us now consider the example of Peter in Acts 3:1-26 regarding the kind of attitude and spirit with which we should serve God.

Peter and John were going up to the temple when a man, lame from his mother’s womb, used to begging alms at the gate of the temple, asked to receive alms from them (vs. 1-3). This man expected alms from the two apostles. But fixing his gaze on him, Peter said:

#### **Acts 3:6**

“I do not possess silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you: In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene—walk!”

A very striking miracle took place immediately before the crowd.

#### **Acts 3:7-11**

7 And seizing him by the right hand, he raised him up; and immediately his feet and his ankles were strengthened.

8 With a leap he stood upright and began to walk; and he entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God.

9 And all the people saw him walking and praising God;

10 and they were taking note of him as being the one who used to sit at the Beautiful Gate of the temple to beg alms, and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.

11 While he was clinging to Peter and John, all the people ran together to them at the so-called portico of Solomon, full of amazement.

Peter raised the man up and at once, the man found that he could walk. The man was ecstatic, so were the witnesses. They were marvelling at what had taken place at the hands of the apostles.

Many would like to be in Peter’s and John’s position—to be able to perform a miracle as incredible as this, and pulling in the crowd as well. In reality, Peter and John were in a precarious position. People in such situations could easily be taken up with all the attention showered on them, and bask in the admiration of the crowds. There can easily be a sense of self-importance and achievement, power and authority—which

the evil one would seek to promote and exploit. Many a servant of God has fallen in such circumstances. We see this happening throughout church history, and we still see it happening today. Such circumstances are fertile ground for the emergence of pride and self-exaltation.

Peter, however, responded admirably in that situation. He did not encourage the people to give him their attention. His response was in sharp contrast to that of Simon recorded in Acts 8:9-24. Note how Peter addressed the crowd.

**Acts 3:12**

“Men of Israel, why are you amazed at this, or why do you gaze at us, as if by our own power or piety we had made him walk?”

He deflected their attention away from himself and directed it to God.

**Acts 3:13-15**

13 “The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified His servant Jesus, the one whom you delivered and disowned in the presence of Pilate, when he had decided to release Him.

14 “But you disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked for a murderer to be granted to you,

15 but put to death the Prince of life, the one whom God raised from the dead, a fact to which we are witnesses.

Peter did not court popularity. He was prepared to speak words that might antagonise the hearers, words that were unpleasant, but needful for them. He pointed out the wrong that they had done in disowning the Saviour whom God had sent. He went on to preach the gospel and urged them to repent.

**Acts 3:16-19**

16 “And on the basis of faith in His name, it is the name of Jesus which has strengthened this man whom you see and know; and the faith which comes through Him has given him this perfect health in the presence of you all.

17 And now, brethren, I know that you acted in ignorance, just as your rulers did also.

18 “But the things which God announced beforehand by the mouth of all the prophets, that His Christ should suffer, He has thus fulfilled.

19 “Therefore repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord;

Peter spoke to their hearts. He explained to them clearly what it was all about so they could understand the truth and focus on the right things—on God, on the Lord Jesus, on the gospel, and on their own sins and their need for repentance.

Having healed a lame person in such a dramatic fashion, Peter could easily have felt a great sense of achievement and could have drawn much attention to himself, to how great he was. But Peter did exactly the opposite. Psalm 115:1 expresses fittingly the spirit with which Peter responded in this situation.

**Psalm 115:1**

Not to us, O Lord, not to us,  
But to Your name give glory...

Peter used the occasion to urge the listeners to repent and place their trust in the Lord Jesus. This was the primary concern of Peter's heart: to exalt God, to care for the eternal well-being of the people and to advance God's kingdom.

This should also be the primary concern of our hearts. If God should see it fit to entrust responsibilities to us, we should fulfil them with the kind of spirit and attitude that Peter displayed, and not to glory in the power and authority that comes with the responsibilities.

**The right spirit and proper approach**

Having considered both positive and negative examples from the Scriptures of those in positions of power and authority, let us learn the lessons well. Let us not entertain any personal desire for power, authority, status, position and recognition. Such desires can be very damaging to our lives, to the lives of others, and can also be a hindrance to the advancement of God's kingdom. We can be certain that the evil one will actively seek to promote and exploit these longings if they are present in our lives. Let us therefore deal decisively with such wrongful desires with the Lord's help.

*Proper perspective*

What then is the right perspective that we should have? Let us look at the account of the seventy sent out by the Lord Jesus for ministry. The Lord Jesus gave them authority to tread upon serpents, scorpions and over all the power of the enemy. This was real power and authority. Luke 10:17-20 describes the disciples' reaction and the lessons that the Lord taught them.

**Luke 10:17-20**

17 ... "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name."  
18 And He said to them, "I was watching Satan fall from heaven like lightning.  
19 "Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing will injure you.  
20 "Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are recorded in heaven."

The disciples were elated when they found out that they could exercise power over the demons. But the Lord Jesus seemed to pour cold water over their sense of joy. It is not wrong for us to rejoice over being able to overpower the enemy. The Lord Jesus has accomplished a great victory at the Cross, and we can rightly rejoice that we can experience this great victory in our lives. Here, the Lord is making a comparison. The thrust of His teaching is that it is more important to have our names recorded in heaven than it is to have power over the enemy. Our eternal well-being in God's kingdom is the most precious thing. This is what really counts.

The words of the Lord Jesus in these verses can also serve as a caution to us not to be caught up with a sense of power, and worse still, to enjoy it for our own ends.

#### *Proper place for power and authority*

Although there are dangers associated with power and authority, there is a proper place for it. Power and authority is necessary for establishing law and order. For both secular government and church leadership to function well, they need to be invested with power and authority.

#### *Importance of healthy submissive spirit*

On the flip side of power and authority is the issue of submission to proper authority. This is relevant to everyone, even to those who are in positions of responsibility and authority because they too have to submit to the ultimate authority, which is God.

The issue of submission is very important. The basic problem of man is rebellion and having a rebellious spirit. When we do not have a healthy submissive spirit, when we do not cooperate with proper authority, the rebellious spirit in us will grow and become more ugly and damaging.

Even if we have legitimate grounds to be concerned or unhappy over a certain issue, there is no reason for us to have a rebellious spirit. If there is rebellious spirit in us, we should ask the Lord to help us deal with it thoroughly and decisively. If we do not, we will be in a precarious position. The evil one will exploit this area of weakness and seriously hinder our walk with God.

#### *Learning from the Lord Jesus*

I will end our consideration on this subject by referring you to the experience of our Lord Jesus. Luke 4:5-7 tells us that He was tempted by the evil one in this area of power and authority.

#### **Luke 4:5-7**

5 And he led Him up and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time.

6 And the devil said to Him, "I will give You all this domain and its glory; for it has been handed over to me, and I give it to whomever I wish.

7 "Therefore if You worship before me, it shall all be Yours."

The evil one offered the Lord Jesus all the kingdoms of the world and their glory if the Lord Jesus would worship him. We cannot be certain about the accuracy of Satan's claim that this domain—the kingdoms of the world—has been handed over to him. But it is possible because the evil one was created with much beauty and great power and God could have given him a certain degree of authority over this earth. Paul refers to the evil one as "the god of this world" (2 Cor. 4:4). Satan can offer to us and tempt us with the power and authority of this world. He can also offer us spiritual power and authority but it is of the evil kind.

A parallel passage in Matthew 4:8-10 gives another account of the same event. This account tells us that the evil one brought the Lord Jesus to a very high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory, saying: "All these things I will give to You, if You fall down and worship me".

Note the spiritual dimension involved. The evil one is actively at work to offer to man the enjoyment of power, fame and authority. He can work so subtly at times that we are not even conscious of it. And as we see in the temptation of the Lord Jesus, the evil one has, as his primary objective, our worship of him. He wants to usurp God's throne and bring us under his own influence. When we receive what he offers us, including this area of power, recognition and authority, we come under his influence.

Note how the Lord Jesus replied.

**Matthew 4:10**

Then Jesus said to him, "Go, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and serve Him only.' "

The Lord Jesus decisively rejected the temptation of the evil one. The Lord said: "Go, Satan!" This reply shows His rejection of Satan and what comes from him. He then affirmed the positive approach we should adopt, and that is, to worship God and serve Him only.

Let us learn from the Lord Jesus' response to Satan. Let us worship the Lord our God, and serve Him only. Let us be vigilant and not allow our hearts to entertain any personal desire for power and authority, fame and recognition. Let our hearts and our whole being be consumed by the worship of God and service unto Him. This is the most effective way to overcome the temptations of power, authority and recognition that we constantly face in this fallen world.

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