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## The Contours of Biblical Authority

*Gospel of John, Part XLVI*

John 13:2-20

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### I. Who is the Greatest? (Lk 22:24-30)

Throughout Jesus' ministry the disciples wrestled with their desire for preeminence. They asked Jesus, "Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" (Mt 18:1ff; Lk 9:46ff) On the way to Capernaum they "disputed among themselves who would be the greatest" (Mk 9:33ff). James and John, the sons of Zebedee, ask that Jesus would grant that they might sit, one on His right hand and the other on His left in His glory (Mk 10:35ff). Their mother likewise gets in on the action, trying to secure their place of privilege (Mt 20:20ff). They angled for power and for prestige.

### II. The Lord Washes the Disciples' Feet

#### A. The Lord Serves (1-5 cf. Lk 22:3-6)

The Lord of glory, the One who possessed all power and might, girded himself as a servant and washed their feet. He didn't do it \_\_\_\_\_ being the Lord of glory; He did it \_\_\_\_\_. He is the Lord of glory.

#### B. Peter Objects (6-11 cf. Mk 8:31-33; Jn 6:66-71; 1 Jn 1:8-10)

Jesus reminds Peter that He sets the terms of their relationship. Jesus is the \_\_\_\_\_; Peter is the \_\_\_\_\_.

Jesus tells Peter, "The one who has been bathed – the one who has been forgiven through faith in Christ, baptized into Christ – has no need to wash – to be saved again, baptized again, delivered again – but is completely clean – in fellowship with God – except for his feet – he does need continued cleansing and forgiveness."

#### C. The Lord Instructs (12-20)

- 12-17 – I have given you an example!
- 18-20 – I have warned you ahead of time! Why won't Judas serve?
  - 18a - First, Judas will not serve because Jesus did not choose him. Judas was not \_\_\_\_\_. I know whom I have chosen.
  - 18b - Second, the Scriptures predicted Judas' betrayal.
  - So why does Jesus deliver this warning?

### III. Application

\_\_\_\_\_ is an inescapable part of human existence. So how are those in authority to exercise authority to the glory of God?

#### A. Biblical Authority Serves

First, biblical authority *serves*. As the Reformation Study Bible notes, “*rank and privilege are not occasions for arrogance, but are higher credentials for \_\_\_\_\_.*”

The foot washing is symbolic of humble service. N.T. Wright explains, “*the truly Christlike leader is known by the ease and spontaneity with which he or she does the little, annoying, messy things – the things which in the ancient world the slave would do, the things which in our world we always secretly hope someone else will do so we won’t have to waste our time, to demean ourselves.*” If you are in authority, your calling is not to look out for yourself but to serve those under your authority.

#### B. Biblical Authority Rules (cf. 1 Tim 3:4-5)

Second, biblical authority *rules*. When the authority stoops and serves, it does not cease to rule, it does not relinquish its position of authority. Godly authorities serve in order to model the service that is expected of all.

Paul reflects this principle in his list of qualifications for those who serve as elders in the church. He writes that an elder must be one who “\_\_\_\_\_ *his own house well, having his children in submission with all reverence (for if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?)...*” (1 Tim 3:4-5)

Authorities are not to serve in such a way that they relinquish their authority. If you are the authority, God has put you in charge. Your responsibility is to rule.

#### C. Biblical Authority Protects

Finally, biblical authority *protects*. Note that Jesus prepares the disciples in two ways:

1. Don’t be surprised by apostasy. (18-19)
2. Don’t call your salvation into question (20)

Jesus uses His authority to prepare the disciples for what is coming. The responsibility of those in authority is to look down the road and to prepare those under our authority for what may be coming.

### IV. Conclusion