

FOR OUR CHILDREN

Again, with pen in hand, we write to you, because we know the things that trouble you. We know that in our world, submission to authority, as commanded by God, has largely become a thing of the past. Indeed, in a world where so few institutions of authority deserve or receive respect, we fear for you in this regard. You are well aware by now, that there are precepts taught by ourselves and the church that are called “standards”. They have become focal points for rebellion and turning away from God. We desire to open your understanding of them deeper than the surface restrictions they appear to place on your freedom.

Adam was not foolish. He was created with both a wonderful memory and intellect. Whereas we, or you, can not remember from day to day where we have placed items, he had named and could remember the names of every animal in this world. He most certainly remembered the words God had used in giving him the only restriction placed upon him. “But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.” But that is not the way he passed the command on to his wife. He must have changed the words and Satan ultimately used the difference to destroy her. Have you ever wondered where the part about touching the tree came from? She was not even created when that commandment was given. Why did Adam do that?

Adam simply spoke from a fear born of love. Picture him walking in the garden with this beautiful woman God has given him. He is aware of her every movement. Every breath she takes is a wonder to him and sends tingles down his spine. He had not even known before that it could tingle. The real wonder of it all is that she loves him. So he is showing off a little. “See that thing over there? That’s a lion. God made it. I named it! It obeys me!”

“Oh, Adam!!”

“See that thing over there? That’s a worm. God made it.
... I named it!”

“Oh Adam, you are so smart!”

“You really think so? See that ball of needles over there? That’s a porcupine. God made it. I named it!”

“Wow Adam, I feel so special just being here in your arms. By the way, what is that funny looking tree in the middle of the garden?”

Adam leaps as if stung, pulls her close to him again, and with real fear in his voice says, “Oh Eve! That’s the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. Don’t eat from it! *Don’t even touch it, baby!* On the day we do, God said we will surely die!”

From fear and love, Adam, the first pastor, the first priest of his family, created the first precept in response to the first drawn line.

What are lines and precepts? In Isaiah 28:9-10, God says, “Whom shall he teach knowledge? And whom shall he make to understand doctrine? Them that are weaned from the milk and drawn from the breasts. For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little and there a little.” He would go on to say that in this concept is found both rest and

refreshing. Obedience would bring a respite from worry and sweating over what is right or wrong. A line is simply a commandment. On one side is disobedience and death, on the other side is obedience and Life. Thou shalt not commit adultery! Pretty plain. Thou shalt keep the Sabbath! No question there. But a precept, that is different. A precept is a principle that is drawn or inferred from a line. For example, in response to the above lines, precepts could be, "Thou shalt not even look upon a woman's nakedness if she is not your wife!" "You will not even prepare food on the Sabbath day!" Who draws the lines? God alone does. Who sets the precepts? Adam, Moses, Peter and other disciples, pastors down through time, including yours, and we, your parents. Both love and God give us that right and responsibility.

God gave Moses commandments, ten of them to be exact. Moses added over 600 precepts when he gave them to the people. They were not given for obedience if the people felt like it. They died when they broke the law of Moses. God gave Moses a line when He told him to keep the people away from the mountain in Ex 19:10-12, but Moses set the boundary as to where the mountain started or stopped. That border, a precept, became the line between life and death. God put Moses in charge of protecting His glory. Whatever he commanded was law in the sight of God. Did Moses glory in the power of his position as pastor over five million or more people? In Numbers 14:13-19, we find him face to face with an angry God intent on destroying the Israelites and creating another nation from Moses alone. On this, and at least one other occasion, he is basically saying, "Over my dead body!" Make no mistake about it, he was prepared to die for his congregation. Did they return his love? Well, in a few verses before, what had prompted God's wrath was their decision to stone Moses to death because they did not care for his leadership. They did not care for the rules he had set to protect them from the wrath of God and to keep the glory of God from departing from their midst. That glory, and those rules, would be what prompted other nations in Deut 4:6-8, to look at Israel with envy for having God in their midst. Moses had the job of creating external laws that would protect his people in the transition between living in Egypt, a type of sin, and living in the promised land as a people set apart for His glory, His purpose, His calling, and His name's sake as a bride.

The disciples had the job of shepherding their congregations in a transition between outward laws that pointed to righteousness and inward laws that would set the people apart for His glory, His purpose, His calling, and His name's sake as a bride. Did they have lines? Yes, they did! Jesus gave them a great number of commandments while He was with them. The two main ones were, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind" and "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Did they create precepts for the protection of the people and for the preservation of the glory of God? Yes they did! We find them in the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles to the church. Did they have the right? In Matt 18:18, Jesus told His disciples that whatever they loosed or bound on earth would be loosed or bound in heaven. Whatever they said, whatever precepts they drew, He would back them up from heaven. Did they love their congregations enough to die for them? Every one was martyred but John, and that was not for lack of effort. Only the preserving power of God kept him alive.

The response of the world to the statutes and judgments commanded by God, believe it or not, is envy. A closer look at Deut 4:6-8, reveals the following. Those around us, when they hear about the lines and precepts that we keep, will regard us as having wisdom and understanding. They will ask, "Who is so great as to have God so close to them, in all that they ask Him to do?" Another question that will come forth is, "Who else has statutes and judgments as righteous as all these rules that they have been given?" If you will listen closely to those around us, the overwhelming response of the world to the standards of the church is this. "I don't think I could live like that, but I sure admire those who do." Unfortunately, all of this response is predicated in Heb 13:17 upon obedience to those that God has placed to rule over us.

Let me introduce you to your pastor, children. They are just like any one else, except for the responsibility and for the title. Just as calling God your Lord is meaningless, unless He is in the position of a Lord over you, so it is meaningless to call someone “pastor” unless you are willing to follow them. Don’t even call them a shepherd unless you intend to follow where they are leading. It is their job to take the sheep to the places where they can best be fed and protected. They can not do that by pushing you. That is not the same as leading you. It is their responsibility before God to protect you from Satan and to protect the glory of God in your life. If that glory ever leaves you, you are fair game to a very angry and very frustrated lion and you probably won’t even know what hit you. So instead, Satan attacks, on a daily basis, the protector of your soul, the one you call pastor. The precepts they set for carrying out the commandments of God in our current world are called “standards,” just like the one Adam set. When they see one of the youth of their congregation preparing to pair themselves up with someone not ruled by the Holy Ghost, and therefore ruled by a carnal nature that is an enemy to God, it is their God given job to say “No!” Because they must protect the glory of God in your life, they institute the precept, “No romantic involvement with youth that are not a part of the “church””. Do you have to obey them? Are they truly your pastor? Do they love you? Ask them how many hours of sleep they have sacrificed pleading with God on your behalf that you not be destroyed. Do they enjoy having to set precepts in response to weights that arise? Not when they feels like they are about to be stoned every time they do it.

As parents, we set up fences around you and our home, because we must. It is our job to protect you from the enemy and to protect the glory of God in our home. We don’t ever want Him to feel uncomfortable enough that He leaves us. It is so much easier to protect you while our home is under the blood. The fences are not to keep you in, for we do not dream that the precepts we set can really dissuade you from anything you set out to do. No, the fences are to draw a line that says, "These kids, this territory, this family, this home, are ours and our God’s. We will die if need be, to protect them." We do not set rules in place because we love to exercise authority. It would be far easier and less stressful if we simply allowed you to do what you wanted. We realize that some of our precepts will tempt you to rebellion or worse. Yet, you must know, that like Moses, even if you start throwing rocks, we will place ourselves between any destroyer that comes for you, be it God or Satan, and say, “Over our dead bodies!” It is our duty and our privilege.

We write this because we want you to understand the position of love in which the responsibilities of authority are grounded. When you consider the many rules set forth by the scriptures, by your pastor, whomever they may be, or by us, you will have to decide whether to trust in that basis of love, whether you understand the need for the fence or not. You will come to many decisions regarding obedience or disobedience to the lines and precepts that will govern your lives. It is our hope that when you make your decision, that your heart will be as tender toward God as that of the one who set the precept in place for your protection. It is our prayer that you will allow the Spirit within you to guide you into truth. That you will respond,

With love,

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What are some of the different forms of authority that you feel you are subject to? Can you think of anyone not subject to authority?
2. Why do you think Adam added to the words of the commandment? Do you think Satan was aware of the difference?

3. What is the difference between a line and a precept? What are some lines and their precepts that govern your life? Who created the lines? Who created the precepts?
4. Did you notice the maturity level required to handle knowledge and doctrine, lines and precepts? Why? What do you think maturity has to do with lines and precepts, natural and spiritual?
5. How many of those with authority over you really seem to enjoy their responsibility and the necessity it creates to set rules and guidelines? Would it be easier for them to just be your friends and enjoy your company?
6. How was even Jesus in submission to authority? To his heavenly father? To his earthly parents? To the Romans?
7. How would you like the responsibility to guide, protect, and teach millions of people who despise you?
8. Were the rules Moses established for Israel really Law in the sight of God? What about the rules your pastor establishes for the church and for you?
9. What would life be like if there were no rules or boundaries for anyone?
10. The word "pastor" essentially means "shepherd". If you are not willing to follow a pastor as a sheep follows and trusts its shepherd, should you even be calling them your pastor? It seems to be similar to calling Christ "Lord," but not allowing Him to rule in your life.
11. How would you feel if you were Moses and the people you loved and were willing to die for wanted to stone you to death? What if God commanded you to be a pastor and the people you loved and were responsible for hated your rules and wanted to fire you? What would you do?
12. Do you think the promise given to the apostles about binding and loosing things on earth and in heaven still applies to the leadership of God's church today? Why or why not?
13. If we only obeyed when we agreed or it pleased us, would that be submission to authority?
14. Do you feel your parents love you? How about your pastor? What rules do you think have been placed upon you by one or the other that are not really motivated by either love or concern?
15. What did Adam lose through rebellion and disobedience? What did Christ gain through obedience and submission? Where is this discussed in the Bible?
16. If your pastor has been given responsibility for your soul and will answer to God for you, what responsibilities and burdens does this place upon them?
17. According to Titus, grace itself is a teacher that instructs us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts. Does this mean that the acceptance of grace also includes the acceptance of boundaries?
18. Do you believe that there are actually people who secretly or even openly admire you for the standards and principles by which you live your life? If we compromise, what happens to their feelings toward us and our witness of holiness?
19. Have you ever had the responsibility for leading an activity or a group and found yourself pushing instead of leading? How did that make you feel?
20. What can you do to help your pastor in their responsibilities?
21. What can you do to harm them?
22. What fences that have been put up in your life really frustrate you, even though you also recognize that they protect you? How?
23. Have you ever really considered how rebellion affects those who love and are trying to protect you?
24. Do you believe that your parents would die to protect you from physical danger or attack? How about spiritual attack? What if you asked them not to? Would it change anything?
25. Do you trust in the love of the God who set forth the lines? Do you trust in the love of the pastor and your parents who set down the precepts? If so, do you still struggle against the boundaries established to preserve you?