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## FOCUS ON THE WILL OF GOD

James R. Cope

[Editor's Note: Searching The Scriptures carried a long series of articles by brother Cope under the heading, Building Better Families. This articles one installment in that series.]

Children learn from seeing and hearing. Few children become Christians who had have no exposure to parents who do not read the Bible and pray. The children who have been exposed to a father and mother whom they see and hear reading God's word, talking about that word, giving thanks for their food and other blessings, and are aware that their parents pray pray to God regularly are made conscious that God plays a major role, yea, the dominant role, in the lives of their parents. When these same children hear their parents talk about God and doing right because they want to please God it is natural for such little ones to grow into maturity with an awareness of this supernatural Provider and Keeper's meaningfulness to their parents. Many of us cannot remember a time when our families were not blessed by such experiences as Bible reading, prayer and conversation about God and spiritual things in our family circles. Blessed is

that child who cannot remember a time that the very thought of a loving heavenly Father was not in its family's thoughts!

### Spiritual Values - Number One

If it be true that spiritual values are the most important of all values it is

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June 8 - 13, 1986

Speaker:

James R. Cope

of Tampa, Florida

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imperative for the entire family to keep spiritual considerations at the top of the list of values. Yea, not merely at the top of the list but even more so! The truly spiritually minded family will be so saturated with spiritual thinking that no planning, or work, or play or visits, or money expenditures, or education, or any social, economic, or physical activities or planning will occur without the first thought being centered in the will of God. When one enters Christ he does so by virtue of Christ entering that individual's heart and therefore his life. The Christian seeks to "bring **every thought** into captivity to the obedience of Christ" (2 Cor. 10:5).

### **The Result of Parental Commitment.**

The family which is truly dedicated to living God's will is one wherein God's word is constantly exalted and appealed to for guidance in every facet of its function will be a happy and trusting family.

I shall never forget visiting a family of ten children and two parents who worked hard to feed and clothe them. Nine of the ten were present that day and all set on wooden benches around a large rectangular table with father and mother side by side at one end. On the wall above the parents were these words inscribed on a plain framed placard:

"Christ is the head of this house. He is the unseen guest at every meal, the silent listener to every conversation." Yes, I know that the father of these children was the physical head of that physical family, but I also know that the head of that man was Christ and that that man was head of his wife (1 Cor. 11:3; Eph. 5:23). Every child at the table was under the control of the father who was controlled by Christ. Spiritually Christ is "head over all thing to the church" (Eph. 1:22) but as certain as a Christian "rules well his own house, having his children in subjection will all gravity" simply because Christ rules him, it would appear that Christ was the head of that house through that father and ten children, everyone one of whom was a member of the spiritual family of which Christ is the head.

The father and mother who focus upon the will of God have everything good going for them in "nurturing" their children "in the chastening and admonition of the Lord." Parents who leave out God in their child nurturing are destined to see a materialistically minded family which ties them to this world only. It is still true that we reap what we sow and, proportionately, much more than we sow! Focus on God's will is a definite element in successful discipline.

## **MAJORITIES AND MANNERS**

James R. Cope

All civilized countries recognize the necessity of government. Different forms of government hold sway in various lands but all admit the necessity of some final tribunal and ultimate authority. Chaos and confusion prevail where no rule obtains. Whether we study the civil, domestic, or religious realm authority must be vested and recognized as existing somewhere if peace and order are to be realities.

### **Authority of Christ Supreme**

In the church of Christ all authority resides in Christ. He is the maker, giver, and judge of his law as well as the discerner

of the hearts of his subjects. On earth there is no super-organization of all Christians with authority stemming from some central headquarters. In view of plain Bible teaching one of the simplest and most revealing tests of the scripturalness of any professed religious organization is the question: Does it have some national or international head on earth? If the answer is the affirmative, such within itself shows that religious not to be the Lord's spiritual body for his church has no such organizational structure.

The only organization which Christ has on earth is the church in some given locality generally spoken of as a congregation of

disciples or baptized believers. The law of Christ governs believers in their congregational relationships just as it governs Christians in their individual relationships. As the individual disciple cannot disregard the will of Christ in his individual activities and remain sinless, so the congregation cannot violate the law of Christ in its congregational or collective activities and remain sinless.

### **Bishops and Expediency**

In the local church God has made provision for bishops to **govern in matters of expediency**. These officers are sometimes called elders, overseers, and presbyters. In matters of faith, i.e., where God has definitely spoken, bishops are under exactly the same obligation to obey implicitly the word of God as are all other Christians. They have an additional responsibility of faith not bound upon all saints, viz., they are to "feed the flock." This is not a matter of judgment but a solemn obligation devolving upon them as a result of the relationship they sustain to those whom they oversee.

In matters of **judgment** or **expediency** those meeting the divine qualifications of bishops are **supreme** and their word is **final**. The Holy Spirit has appointed them and to resist their authority is to rebel against the Holy Spirit. God knew that the final decisions in the sphere of expediency had to be made by somebody, and divine wisdom has provided for them in the eldership. Regardless of the individual's judgment, it becomes his solemn obligation to acquiesce in the bishops' rule where that rule is announced. For all practical purposes their decision is God's decision, and therefore, must become the disciple's decision. To do otherwise is to nullify the office of elders and reflect upon God's purpose in providing them. If their decisions can be disregarded, their office can be ignored. If their office can be ignored, God's word can be set aside, for it makes provision for bishops in the churches.

### **The Spirit Of Rebellion**

Sad to say, many feel today that God's

word can be set aside. They will not admit it but their actions betray their true sentiment. When rebellion breaks out and the judgment of qualified, God-fearing elders become the target of invectives and harsh criticisms of loose thinking and looser-talking church members, the Lord's word has been set aside and his own government attacked. Either elders are to rule or they are not to rule. If they are to rule, they must be obeyed. If they are not to rule, divine wisdom was mistaken in commanding that they be obeyed.

When the spirit of rebellion begins to foment, it generally finds expression in overt acts. Absalom became the victim of his own vain ambition to rule in David's stead before the people were stirred to help him consummate his evil designs in dethroning his father. His dissatisfaction with the existing order, first, and his conceited notion that he could successfully replace God's appointed king, next, formed the framework of his scheme to usurp the throne of Israel. His foolish folly is best seen in the overthrow of his plan and the loss of his life.

A disposition to throw out the elders and change the existing order is the thing of the day in some localities. It is the mind of Absalom, and the spirit of Korah. When it takes tangible form, it is overt rebellion against God and the gospel. It denies the authority of Christ and brings his body to open shame. Within the last decade churches all over the land have witnessed such heart-rending spectacles, and the cause at large has suffered irreparable damage as a direct result of this spirit.

### **Majority Manners**

Most always the situation resolves itself into majority rule versus elder rule, and eventually into open division of the congregation. Christian principles and decent manners fall prostrate before majority vote. The would-be rulers take over, and the men who only a short while before held the confidence and respect of all are now ambushed by ambition, scourged by scoffing, and crucified by calumny.

Where gospel preachers are willing to submit themselves to the judgment of elders when they fire as well as when they hire, the situation will rapidly improve. If preachers and elders will hold faithfully and constantly before the congregation, its responsibility and proper attitude toward the elders the disciples will not likely get out of control. This is one sure way to honor the divine arrangement and preserve the peace of God's people.

-- from The Preceptor  
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