

## **CHURCH GOVERNANCE**

# CHURCH GOVERNANCE IN THE CHRISTIAN CIRCLES OR PERSPECTIVE

# RATIONALE& JUSTIFICATION (This helps us detail the aims and objectives of this course/lessons.)

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This helps us to explore the whole debate about Church Government and all it entails. One need to understand what governance really is and how it ought to be conducted in a Christian leadership mindset. Though God ALMIGHTY IS THE Sovereign leader with all authority and power he leads the kingdoms of men with wisdom, unsearchable understanding and also has power and might. Every other leadership and governance needs to take cognizance of this. This therefore will help us explore the following **objectives**:

- I. It offers the reader/learner the opportunity to identify the various types of governance structure
- II. To have an understanding of the requirements in a typical governance structure in a church institution that be.
- III. To help the leader or administrator to know how to respond to various issues as pertains church government
- IV. To help analyze the roles and functions of church government and its relations with the congregants
- V. To appreciate the diversity of governance structures in view of different ideologies and Theological inclination
- VI. To enable the church leader to analyze various pitfalls and to avoid them.
- VII. To enable and enhance equity, professionalism, ethics and integrity in daily undertakings of church work indeed governance

#### INTRODUCTION

#### What is church? IS IT A BUILDING OR A PEOPLE /CONGREGANTS?

This is often confused by not afew people who profess the Christian faith and their fellow men. Many times what is called church is seen to be termed as building cathedral or structure. When church men and women, the clergy and the laity talk about the church some may refer to buildings while others mean to say the people or congregants. But the church truly is indeed the people, the saints ,the congregation or said in other words the flock of God. WE SEE Jesus saying, 'AND YOU ARE Peter and upon this rock will I BUILD MY CHURCH AND THE GATES OF HELL SHALL NOT PREVAIL AGAINST IT.(MT 16:18)Those were very strong and powerful statement from Jesus to Peter about his church. Therefore we can conclude the church is more than a structure, more than a cathedral or a nice magnificent building, temple or sanctuary. Rather it is the people called out ones so referred to as *Ecclesia*. The universal Church-the world wide or global church, assembly or congregation that Christ died for.



The Church is the bride of Christ. The analogy of the bride who is thoroughly prepared for the bridegroom. We see in the gospel of John when John spoke to the disciples concerning Christ he said, 'Behold! The lamb of God who removes the sins of the world..'Jn1:29 Further more he points to Jesus in these words when he heard of his growing fame. The friend of the bride is the bridegroom. The friend rejoices because he hears the groom's voice. Then he says,'The joy is all mine. He must increase but I must decrease.(Jn 3:29,30) How many spiritual fathers can have such words concerning their spiritual sons. How many bishops can have such firm not flattery, reassuring words of approval to their spiritual sons? Very few if any and I must say they must be the ones delivered of fear and insecurity and ministerial jealousy. But John said He (Jesus) whom he released into the ministry and whom he became the fore —runner, must increase while he decreased.

This is what prophet Malachi said when he said that God will turn the fathers' heart to sons and the sons heart to fathers. Notice the sequence and order ;Fathers heart to son first and since anyone yearns and cries for recognition the sons will follow suit ,their hearts also will be turned to their fathers.(Mal3)If that does not happen there is jealousy ,confusion, hatred ,competition and God is left with no other option than to smite the earth with a curse. We must take care.

- We see from the same text of John the third chapter, about the bride groom and friend. We belong to Jesus, he is the groom and we are the bride. Those of us who have the blood washed righteousness. Once cleansed by that blood upon confessions of sin, we counted righteous and are justified through faith in our Lord and savior Jesus Christ. We become the sons of God. Therefore the Church Ecclesia is made up of congregation or assembly of believers who have attained word washed righteousness. Those who have confessed and have made or let Jesus be their Lord and savior.
- Thus the challenge to all of us is that; the Lord is coming for a church without spot or wrinkle. A church that is holy and without blemish..(Eph 5:27)That is the church we ought to be and should strive to be. That church is compared with the bride and groom. It is the work of the bridegroom there fore to take care of the bride (the church) to be thus perfect.

#### WHAT ABOUT CHURCH AND GOVERNMENT?

WE HAVE SEEN THE DEFINITION OF A CHURCH. What is Church government? Church government is the instituted authority over the church or flock. Hence it is ordained by God and acts on his behalf (if doing what is right, just, lawful-in accordance to the law of God). Therefore we see the church government as the Godly ordained authority over the church instituted by and through the church.

There must therefore be established and agreed structures through which and by which the church operates. The church does not operate in a vacuum, there must be order, law and regulations clearly spelt out and followed for the benefit of all. The leader and the led. The governing and the governed.

CHURCH GOVERNMENT STRUCTURES



1)PREBYSTERIAL —This is the type of governance structure where elders or presbytery are empowered as decision makers and advisers. There are pastors, reverends, bishops or as the PCEA CHUCH TERE IS MODERATOR of various levels district-region-national-General Assembly.

The disadvantage with this the pastor or parish minister is not as powerful and is at the mercies of the elders. I they differ with him they can initiate or recommend for his ouster. Though the decision can be appealed there is no guarantee for being reinstated. SOME ELDERS/COUNCIL MIGHT BE BIASED OR HOODWINKED BY SOME PEOPLE WITH ULTERIOR MOTIVE OR MALICE AND MAY PLAN AN OUSTER QUE.

Advantage: If the Presbyterian system is well followed with good order, bounderies and discilpline it helps to bring order in church, maintain church discipline and guards flock form manipulation and base gain from an individual.

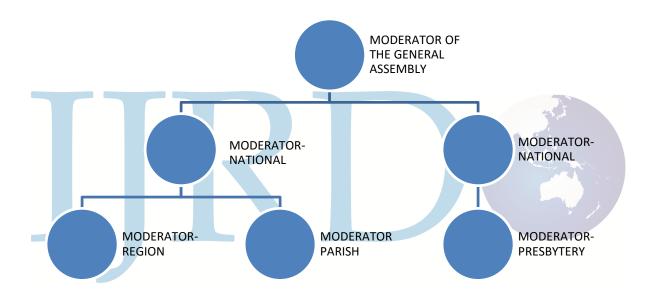


Fig 1:depiction of a typical governance structure in a presbyterial system



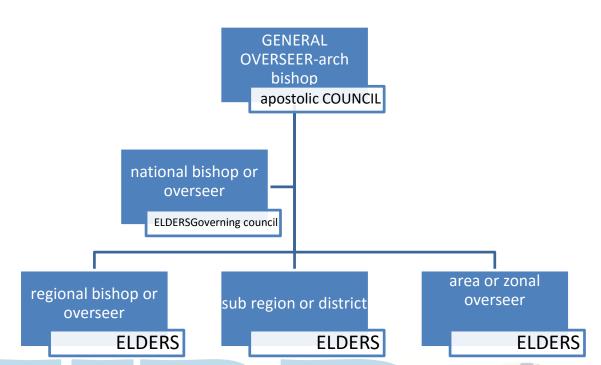


Fig. 2:Depiction of a different fashion of Presbyterian church governance structure

Another form is where there is BISHOP-DEPUTY BISHOP-PASTOR- ELDERS-CONGREGATION. This could be called Bishopric governance. Bishop in Greek is he same word in meaning for both pastor and elder Poimen although the offices stand independently function-wise In this form the pastor has power OVER THE ELDER WHO FORM THE CHURCH BOARD OF A

LOCAL CHURCH. They can't prevail over him as the chair and visioner. (Grudem, w 2006)

The advantage is this structure is that the pastor is able to propel God –given vision undisturbed

and elders ought to submit.

The dis advantage is that there might be too much power vested on the paster and if not

The dis advantage is that there might be too much power vested on the pastor and if not genuine may bulldoze or manipulate the flock for own gain.

If there are no sound teaching heretic teachings may get route into the church.

There is therefore need for level headed accountability above him say a senior pastor ,overseer or bishop. Proper working constitution is needed to be followed to avoid misuse of authority or autonomy

3. The other type of governance structure is that of no one being the leader but Holy ghost.

The danger however is when heresy may find its way. There might be no definite order of dealing with doctrinal issues, divisions, rebellion or funny spirits like divination, false or copied prophesy etc.

The only advantage is if the are holy and sober and they release themselves to the Holy spirit. The Holy Spirit can, has and do speak/has spoken. He did so to the early church.e.g Acts 13.WHEN THEY WERE FASTING AND PRAYING THE HOLY SPIRIT SPOKE...set apart for me Saul and Barnaba's for the work I have for them. In that church there were prophets and teachers.

The bible teaches that we should test prophecy.1 THES 5:17-22,1 jn 4:1

Test spirits lest there be anti Christ and deception Spirit.



The type of leadership and governance structure depends on the founders vision, biblical truths and inclination and the need to submit to a certain authority.

#### **CHURCH AND AUTHORITY**

**AUTHORITY COMES FROM GOD** 

People must learn to submit and humble under authority. They must respect God instituted authority. Read Rom 13

Those in authority have an easy time if obeyed

Order and proper leadership happens where authority is recognized and respected.

The leaders or those in authority should not misuse their God given authority 1PTR 5. They should not Lord it over . Also Jesus mentioned it to his disciples in the gospels . That the Lords of this world are Lords and benefactors but it ought not to be so among saints. We should be servants unworthy only fulfilling the will of the master. And God will give us a reward. When Jesus the chief shepherd shall appear he will give us a reward. 1 Ptr 5:1-5

Order-honor-respect-humility-dutifulness-accountability-integrity-communication using right non abusive words are some of the virtues that should be cultivated and employed in godly leadership and governance. Those who don't obey attract judgement from God and kings/leaders wrath.

**CHURCH and POWER** 

Power is good if used well and if gained in the right way and for the right purpose.

#### Why do you need power?

When Herod said that he had power to jail Jesus or have him killed or released Jesus told him, 'you have no power but that which God has given unto you'(jn19 lk24)We need to know as moderators, reverends, bishops, pastors any title our power is borrowed or delegated power. We should fear God as we execute our duties.

Power has been misused by some leaders who only brought judgement to themselves.

People when pushed too much they tend to rebel and hit back. Even a rubber band has its own elastic limit beyond which it raptures and hits/injures the bearer.

Leaders must learn to listen to others under their care and not always oppose or threaten.

God can speak thro' other people. (Mburu, 2009)

There are some church leaders who use the O.T APPROACH TO LEADERSHIP **THE MOSES APPROACH** where God only speaks to one person(Moses) the visionary while others cooperate and follow without questioning. Much as this might be good and abit easy for the boss it might not be the best some obey in fear not in love and respect. Earn the respect of your flock.

THE NEW TESTAMENT APPROACH: This where there is right leadership but you acknowledge the priesthood of all believers. In other words there are definite lines of authority and accountability. One is accountable to one another and to the laid down authority. The pastor gives people direction and also allows to let them hear God speaking to them. It is good to have control lest the window of freedom is misused hence healthy boundaries. The prophetic words let them come but be weighed or measured against the word of God. There must be trust,respect,Godly fear, Integrity and congruency. Walking the talk. The leaders or elders will respect you rather than fear you.

Do the people you lead fear you or respect you?



It is time to maintain a balance.

#### **CHURCH DISCIPLINE**

Discipline is doing the right thing at the right time for the right purpose done in the right manner.

There must be discipline in the house of God which is the church of the living God as Paul told Timothy.

The quietness of Moses and his meekness made Aaron and Miriam fight and speak ill about him. Although God intervened and punished Miriam with Leprosy we must not allow rebellion to grow and mature. Every shepherd should know how to deal with rebellion and nip it in the bud lest it cause division and confusion in the church.

Remember the story of **Absalom** and **David**. He thought he was strong well built handsome and intelligent, even cheated him to be wiser than the father. He endeared himself to people, sat at the gate ,enticed them, listened to them ,welcomed them. A mr. Nice compassionate and readily available. He stole people's heart then brought a revolt. He intended to kill and oust the after –King David. **He sought counsel of Ahithophel** and Hushai. Ahithophel advised him to sleep with his fathers concubines during broad day light on top of the roof. This was wrong, wicked abominable and disrespectful. He ended up being killed by **Joab** when he hang suspended in the woods since he had long hair which was caught up when riding on a mule. Ilsam 16-18

All people who rebel do not end up well, they die or become mad . They attract God's wrath and judgement to self and family.

# Rebellious people in the Bible

- 1) Ahithophel –disloyal betrayed David's trust in him. He committed suicide
- 2) **Joab** –though a general wanted praise when he won a city
- 3) Adonijah-led a revolt ,self proclaimed king-he was killed by Solomon's commander Joab
- 4) Absalom-led a revolt, wanted to usurp fathers power died shamefully 2 Sam 18
- 5) **King Saul** –fought David his replacement they died same day with his sons 2sam 1 at Mt Gilboa though David mourned for him
- 6) **Diotrephes**-stopped people to do good 3jn
- 7) **Judas Iscariot** –betrayed Jesus. Jesus died and resurrected as for him he perished Jn 19,Acts 1:17-21 committed suicide, his bowels bursted,fell headlong
- 8) Dathan & Korah-opposed Moses they were swallowed by the ground Num 16.Other congregation murmured the following day God wanted to destroy all of them were it not for Moses and Aaron intervention. But 14700 were already killed by the time appearament or atoning sacrifice was offered.
- 9) When all pple rebel turn against God servant Num14 waited to go back to Egypt
- 10) Miriam & Aaron rose against Moses ,God heard and intervened ,Miriam became leprous Num11
- 11) We can learn from these bad examples so that we don't repeat their mistakes ,sin or rebellion.
- 12) Rebellion is like witchcraft and disobedience is like idolatry. 1sam 15
- 13) Apostle Paul urges us to respect those in authority and to pray for them.TO CONSIDER THEIR LIFE STYLE AND IMITATE THEIR FAITH heb 138-16



You may want to read a book by Dag Howard Mill dealing Disloyalty and a guide by Wayne Grudge 'Sysmatic Theology a 2006 Edition.

The Holy Bible to ascertain the quotations

#### **ROLE OF CONGREGATION**

The congregants are also the brethren, saints or gathering. Some clergy or authors refer to them as assembly meaning a group of churched members both men, women and children for a common aim to worship God, serve him and live for him. We see in the Pauline epistles saying that we are Christs workmanship created in Christ Jesus to do the good works which God for ordained for us to do from the beginning of the world.

We are called to serve God and his servants(clergy) and one another (the laity). Someone argued that all clergy are laity but not all laity are clergy. The Clergy must be well versed in the law of God, the Biblical teachings both Old and New Testament and have a grasp of the various world views to maintain a balance.

We got a call, a task a duty an obligation.

We should serve God Cursed is the man who does the work of God with slackness Jer 47:10
We should worship God DT6:4-9 Hear Oh Israel the Lord thy God is one and you shall love the
Lord thy God with all your strength, with all your heart, with all our mind(soul)and with all
your might....Israel was supposed to observe the commandments and statutes and to teach
them to their children.

We should serve our fellow men. *The Lord says whatever you do to the least of our brothers* that you do unto me Mt 25vs.40(read the text to have a good grasp.mt26:33-46)

We are called to obey those in authority. Authority comes from God and those who obey live in peace but those who disobey do so for their own hurt.Rom 13 1 Ptr 5:5-6 Likewise you younger people submit yourselves to your elders. Yes all of you be submissive to one another and be clothed with humility, for God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.VS6.Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time.

1ptr 2:12-21 Peter the Apostle taught that 'Having your conduct honorable among the gentiles proof them wong despite the fact they speak of you as evildoers they may be observe your good life/walk or conversation and may glorify God during the day of your visitation.

Vs 13 submission –'submit yourself to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake whether to the king as supreme .

Vs 14.submission to governors who are sent by God to punish evildoers abd for the praise of those who do good.

Vs15.It is the will of God to do good so that you put to silence the ignorance of foolish men Vs16.Cautioned to live freely but not to use our freedom as pretext for evil but as bond servants of Christ. We ought to be willing servants not forced but willing.

Vs17.Called to honour all people, love the brotherhood. Fear God ,honour the King.(1 PTR 2:12-21.READ THE TEXT)

Pray for your man of God, his family and the church indeed the work of God.



Pray for the other brethren, live in peace.

Walk in love, holiness and humility.

Imitate the character of Christ (Read Eph 4:25-30,eph 5:1-10 Col 3:1-16)

Obey the established leadership be a disciple a follower.

Grow in the matters of faith

The disciple is not above his teacher and a teacher is not above his master. It is enough for a student or disciple to be like his teacher AND A SERVANT AS HIS MASTER.Mt10;24-25

# Qualifications of bishops and elders

**There are** certain qualities that leaders should possesss. Bishops, pastors and elders have received a high calling and they are supposed to be above reproach, blameless and upright , humble , sober self controlled and not given to much wine or drunkardness.

Lets look at bishops qualification according to Apostle Paul.

It starts by saying and emphasizing the nobility of the bishops office. He goes ahead to give us qualifications as follows:

- 1.A bishop must be blameless
- 2. Husband of one wife
- 3.temperate
- 4.A bishop must besober minded
- 5.A bishop must have good behavior
- 6>A bishop must be gentle and not quarrelsome
- 8.A bishop must not be coveteous
- 9. Must not be a novice, new convert or inexperience lest he become proud and be judged with the devil.

10>Must be well spoken i.e of good report or good testimony lest he make the Word to be disdained or put it in disrepute or fall in devils snare. MAY GOD HELP PASTORS AND BISHOPS.IT THEREFORE CALL FOR SELF CONTROL AND SELF CONTROL AND SELF RESPECT.DON'T JUST TALK.DON'T BE QUICK TEMPERED.DON'T BE QUICK TO JUDGE.THINK AGAIN!PRAY AGAIN!SAINTS AND MEMBERS PRAY FOR PASTORS AND BISHOPS.

He end s by a tough statement that for if a man can not be able to rule his own house can't be able to take care of the church of God.(1Tim3:1-7)

NB//:TheseQUALIFICATIONS also apply to elders and pastors

Qualification. The word poimen has same meaning as afore mentioned.

**Qualifications of DEACONS** 

- 1. Must be reverent in behaviuor
- 2.Not double tongued must have congruency, walk the talk able to keep secret.
- 3.Not given to much wine
- 4. Not greedy for money(many people need God's help on his and n0.1 and 3)
- 5. Holding the mystery of the faith with apure conscience
- 6.Blameless



# BUT LET THESE BE FIRST TESTED THEN LET THEM SERVE AS DEACONS BEING FOUND BLAMELESS

Wives of elders, bishops and of deacons

Reverent

- 2.Not slanderers-take care what you talk
- 3. Temperate or domestic -be calm and hospitable, be welcoming
- 4. Faithful in all things not some all things matrimonial, financial, family, church etc.

THOSE WHO HAVE SERVED WELL AS DEACONS OBTAIN GOOD STANDING.At Paul said they be given double honour those who rule well. It could include honorarium. These things are to help clegy and laity to conduct themselves in the church which is the house of God.

#### THE OLD AND THE YOUNG

Much as we belong to the church as brethren there must be respect and healthy boundaries. The ELDER

Older men need be reverent in behavior —walkin Godly fear not abusive and immoral behavior. People need to watch the trap of mid life crisis. They should live well with their wives and children. They should manage their homes well.

- 2.They should be proper in sound doctrine not be misled or carried by every wind of teachings eph4:11-17
- 3. They should be sober , reverent temperate-self controlled not outbursts of wrathor anger.
- 4. They should be sound in faith not heresy
- 5. They should walk in love
- 6. They should be patient (Read Titus 2:1-2)

#### **OLDER WOMEN**

- 1. They should be reverent in behavior
- 2. Not slanderers-abusive which tempts many.
- 3.Not given to much wine-in the culture then wine was part of food. There was new wine and old wine. Old wine if taken in great measures intoxicated people. Drunkardness is condemned. (rd pro 23)
- 4. Teachers of good things not wickedness or bad teachings but what is good
- 5. They should teach/admonish the young women to love their husbands and children
- 6They should be discreet not loud mouthed, be pure not polluted
- 7. They should be homemakers-today how many home makers and home wreckers do we have.

Some wives are killing their husbands and vice versa but that shouldn't happen.

8>They should be good

9>They should be obedient to their own husband not any other but their own

That the word of God be not blasphemed. Some women have caused the word of God to be blasphemed.

YOUTHS OR Young people –Girls and boys /ladies and gentlemen

- 1. Chaste
- 2.Self controlled



- 3. Submissive to parents and authorities-some rebel. Rebellion is as the sin of witch craft and disobedience as idolatry.
- 4. Sober not confused and easily influenced. Be sober minded
- 5 Be examples to the rest. People are looking for a good example to follow. A pattern of good works. Youths can do lots of good works and be of help to both church and society not idling and immoral behavior which dishonors God .Be like the biblical Joseph who stood his ground amidst temptations.

6:Be men and women of integrity

7Reverent in behavior-walk in godly fear

8. Incorruptible

9sound speech not careless talk or arguments which don't profit

10. Sound speech which can't be condemned

4Mark you an opponent should have nothing evil.

**BOND SERVANTS AND EMPLOYEES** 

- 1. Be obedient to own masters
- 2. Be faithful-in money matters and work even sexual purity
- 3. Not answering back or refractory speech
- 4. Not to render eye service –do it as unto God (see col3:17, 23)
- 5. To adorn the doctrine of God-be full of good works not anger carelessness and lack of enthusiasm.

6.Be godly

When each does what is right there will be order and good governance .The name of God will be glorified and the kingdom of God will expand.

Jesus said after we have done a task to say, 'we are just unworthy servants. Don't vain glory. SEEK TO GLORIFY God. Don't only wait to be pushed be self-driven, serve the Lord. Apt Paul says in Colossians, 'We serve the Lord Jesus Christ.(Col 3:24.

May God bless us help us and give us more grace to tackle church government, obey leadership and those in authority and be disciplined for his own glory and praise of His great and Holy Name.

#### SUBMISSION VS CHALLENGES AND OPPOSITION

Authority though it comes from God we see some people abuse or misuse it for their undue advantage. Others out rightly defy authority to their own peril. Let's look at the following.

Jesus case: Jesus was the son of God but had earthly parents Joseph and Mary. One time has parents left him behind in Jerusalem and we see he was teaching and reasoning with the sanhedrins. They marveled at his understanding and knowledge of scripture. The parents once they realized Jesus was not with them after three days journey they were helter skelter looking for him. When they came to Jerusalem they found him in the temple reasoning with the sanhedrins and teachers of the law. They asked him son why did you do this to us? In response he asked why did you look for me did you not understand I was supposed to be in my fathers business. The bible however says, 'He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them but his mother kept all these sayings in her heart. (Luke 2:48-52)



Administration as a gift:In Romans the 12<sup>th</sup> chapter we see various gifts which are also referred to as the seemingly minor gift though they are not minor and they are also known as 'service 'gifts. We serve God in the following capacities:

A(Ministry to God -worship

- B) Ministry to the brethren-service
- C) Ministry to the world –evangelism and acts of mercy. Like helping hand/alms to needy orphans, widows, destitute, poor etc. Among the gifts is administration or governance. What do they do they rule but need to do so with diligence. (Rom 12:8)
- Apt Paul appeal to the Romans thro'Tychicus is that every soul should subject itself to the instituted authority and reiterates that it comes from God. Those who disobey get the repercussions. They are punished. In Joshua day and Moses times it was tantamount to death by stoning. (Jos1:16-18) In Moses day the rebellion of Dathan and Korah and 250 others attracted divine judgement after Moses prayer and God's intervention. They died unnatural or uncommon death. This should come as a warning to us all and to you reading this rebellion, defiance and disobedience attracts God's wrath, curse, judgement and end result is death. Why should you have your life destroyed prematurely even your family.
- Remember the sin of Achan, he disobeyed holy instructions. God had said that the spoil from Jericho was supposed to be holy to the Lord as a type of first fruits but he led by greed took a tunic .That costed his life and that of his entire family.(Joshua 7:1-26)He also caused the death of 36 innocent soldiers (Josh 7:5)They were stoned until the stones buried them and became a big heap. The place has been named the valley of Achor to this day.(Josh 7:26)Take care you who are or about to be rebellious.
  - Benefit of having an authority present: **The Elisha vs sons of prophet** case: This account is recorded in the book of 2 Kings 6. The sons of prophets felt they needed to expand their dwelling place. One went to Elisha and requested him to go with them. Elisha accompanied them. When they were in the process of cutting trees along Jordan river the axe head fell and sank into the water. He cried ,'Oh My Lord ,it was borrowed. Elisha cut a stick and asked where it fell. He showed him then he dipped the stick and the axe re surfaced (King James says the axe did swim). This underscores the importance of submitting under authority. (2 Kings 6:1-7)

In the testing of obedience we see God had told Jeremiah to prepare wine and give **to the sons of Recchab** but they declined saying that their father had warned them and made them swear an oath of not drinking wine at all. Even when Jeremiah told them so they refused. God was happy and pleased with the Recchabites and said that he would never lack someone to sit in priestly seat.(Jer 35:1-18)They were blessed and preserved, their ministry sustained because of obedience. Just how is your obedience and or disobedience.

Some people are arrogant and speak refractory language. Arguments and justification for their arrogance, defiance and rebellion.

Rebellious people don't get God's blessing and if one time blessed their down fall is sure and terrible. They are the kind of Janes and Jambre who opposed Moses. The bible calls them witches; they do not go far for their folly is soon revealed.2tim 3

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To God Be The Glory.

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