

The Authority of the Believer

(Part 1 - Authority Defined)

On the subject of The Authority of the Believer, there is very little understanding. This is not because such **authority** is the property of a select group of people. On the contrary, it is the possession of every child of God. It is one of the most exceptional blessings Christ secured for us on the cross. *“Behold, I give you the **authority** to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you” (Luke 10:19).*

From the Garden of Eden until now the enemy has sought to hold back knowledge concerning **authority** from God's people. That such authority exists is generally recognised, but often it is mixed up with other aspects of the “faith life” and so it loses its distinctive value and power. The Authority of the Believer is sometimes confused with the fullness of the Spirit. It's taught that the coming of the Spirit of God into the human soul (in His divine fullness) brings authority. However, this ‘fullness’ is not the source of our **authority**, but something apart from it. Neither can **authority** be regarded as some ‘special gift’, whereby the recipient is provided with power by which he performs mighty acts, such as the casting out of evil spirits. The discerning of spirits and miraculous deeds of power are mentioned among the “charismata” (gifts) of the Holy Spirit, but they differ from **authority**.

To others, the Authority of the Believer is looked upon as nothing more than prevailing prayer. We have probably all heard of men on their knees interceding. Yet, after they have passed through the agony or enthusiasm of intercession, no results are evident. Personal blessing may have resulted from the intense seeking of God's face, but a specific answer to their requests has not been manifest.

So what is authority? Firstly, let us define the difference between "authority" and "power." In the New Testament the translators have not been uniform in the rendering of many Greek words, and these two words have been especially affected. One notable instance is in our opening scripture (**Luke 10:19**) where “power” is frequently used twice, even though there is a different Greek word in each instance. Translating the first of these with the word "authority" gives a clearer idea of the true meaning of this passage. The Greek word “*exousia*” is literally “*the right to exercise power*”, however, its root meaning is “*the liberty of doing as one pleases.*”

Here is a familiar example of **authority**... A policeman stands at the intersection of two main roads. Crowds of people are surging past and a large number of high-powered vehicles rush by. Suddenly, he steps out into the middle of the road and raises a hand. Instantly, the tide of traffic ceases. He then signals to the waiting people on each pavement and immediately they begin to cross the road. What's the explanation? The traffic officer has very little physical "power." Even his most strenuous efforts could not hold back one of those passing vehicles. But he has something far better. He is invested with the "authority" of the organisation he serves. The crowds of people and the moving drivers all recognise this **authority** and obey it.

Authority is delegated power. Its effectiveness depends entirely upon the force behind the user. There is a story told about the late W. E. Gladstone, Prime Minister of Great Britain. On one occasion, he brought in to Queen Victoria, an important document for signature, in order that it might become law. The Queen objected

to it, and after discussion, refused to sign. The Minister of the Crown was unusually bold: "Your Majesty," he said, respectfully but firmly, "you must sign this Bill." Assuredly she turned and said: "Sir, I am the Queen of England." Unmoved, the Senior Statesman answered quietly: "Your Majesty, I am the people of England." After a little thought, she accepted the situation, and affixed her signature to the document.

This story clearly illustrates the matter of **authority** when two opposing 'powers' are in conflict. A believer, who is fully conscious of the divine power behind him, and of his own **authority**, can therefore face the enemy without fear or hesitation. Those who confront him may bear specific names of power or authority: **"we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, and against powers (exousias - authorities)."** However, behind the **authority** we possess, is a "Power" infinitely greater than that which backs our enemies, and which they are compelled to recognise and obey.

What is the source of our authority? God wants *"the eyes of your understanding to be enlightened, that you may know what is the hope of His calling. what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints" (Ephesians 1:18). The hope (confident expectation) of His calling is the **authority** He has invested in you! Authority is your inheritance! What's more, when the Lord Jesus was raised from the dead, the act of resurrection was accomplished through *"the exceeding greatness of His power (dunamos), toward us who believe, according to the working (energeia) of the strength (kratous) of His might (ischuos)"* (verse 19). In this working there was such an out pouring of divine omnipotence that the Holy Spirit, through the apostle Paul, uses four words of special significance to express it. The grouping and combination of these words signifies that behind the 'fact' of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus there lay the mightiest working (energy) ever imagined.*

Having been raised from the dead, Christ Jesus was exalted by God to His own right hand and seated in heavenly places (verse 20). And then the reason why such a mighty working was necessary becomes clear. The resurrection of our Lord Jesus had been opposed by the tremendous "powers of the air", that is, *"all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world (age) but also in that which is to come"* (verse 21). All the evil forces, of all the "ages", had been assembled against the plan and purpose of God. But they were baffled and overthrown. After totally defeating the devil, the risen Lord was enthroned **"far above"** every name that is named – ruling with the **authority** of the Most High forever and ever.

When paying attention to the **"exceeding greatness of His (God's) power,"** we passed over four very important words: "toward us who believe." All the demonstration of the glory of God, as shown in the manifestation of His omnipotence, pointed toward us. The cross of Jesus Christ, inflicted a crushing defeat to all the enemies of God, but it reveals a representative Man (Jesus) preparing a throne and a heavenly ministry for those who overcome through Him. In this regard, our identification with Christ, in His death and resurrection, is vital. The Holy Spirit so arranged the structure of this whole passage that one single fact might be emphasised, and that is, 'Christ and His people were raised together'. If you weren't raised with Him you could not be seated with Him, and if you are seated with Him, you do not have the **authority** He passed on. So where do we find the verb that controls this passage? It's in **verse 20** of Chapter 1: *"According to that working of the strength of His might when He raised HIM from the dead (then, putting a*

parenthesis around the words at the end of the chapter)... *And YOU when you were dead."*

The same verb that expresses the resurrection of Christ expresses also the resurrection of you and me! That is to say, the very power of God that raised Jesus from the dead also raised us. Head and body are naturally raised together - Christ, who is the Head; and His body, the Church (you and me). This is an important statement, one that the spiritual significance cannot be overestimated. The apostle Paul in Romans 6 develops the same thought, where the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus are shown to also include His people. But in today's passage we are raised together with the ascended Christ to heavenly places, where we are made legitimate partakers of Christ's throne (His authority).

Where is our authority located? There can be no misunderstanding of the Holy Spirit's meaning in this presentation of the 'elevation' of God's people with Jesus Christ. He repeats it a second time in **Ephesians 2:4-6**. We are made to sit with Christ "*in heavenly places.*" Christ's position is at the *right hand of God*, therefore, we occupy "with him" the same position of **authority**. Note, this honour is not to a chosen few, but is the inheritance of all those who share in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is the birthright of every one of us – of every child of God! When the "Master" gathered with the eleven, at some time during the forty days after His crucifixion, He said to them: "*All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.*" However, the formal consummation of that authority took place when He sat down "*at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty on high*" (**Hebrews 1: 3**). The right hand of the throne of God is the 'centre' of divine power (which controls and upholds the whole universe), and the exercising of that **power** was committed to the ascended Jesus. He is still there, in full possession of all His rights and privileges, with His enemies under His feet.

The elevation of God's people (with Christ) to "heavenly places" has no other meaning - we have been made complete sharers of the **authority**, which is rightfully His! We are made to sit with Him; that is, share His throne. To share a throne means (without question) to partake of the **authority**, which it represents. Indeed, we have been elevated, for this very purpose! It is our inheritance! We have been given the power to exercise **authority** over the powers of darkness, and over the conditions that those powers have brought about on the earth. But the key to a life of victory isn't having such **authority**, it is exercising that authority! Your authority must be energised for it to be effective!

Notice, when the Lord Jesus was raised from the dead, the awesome act of the resurrection was accomplished through "*the exceeding greatness of His power, toward us who believe, according to the working (energeia) of the strength of His might*" (verse 19). This could read, "*according to the energising of the strength of His might.*" Here, we see the blessed Holy Spirit using the same principle. He deliberately **energises** the *strength of His might*! Likewise, we need to deliberately "energise" our **authority** and then use it against "*all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named.*" Our authority in Christ is absolute! That means it must be obeyed when directed at our enemies.

Let's *energise* our authority right now by *exercising* our faith in God's word. And then, let us use that authority against the all the hostile forces that are opposing us. Remember, *we do not wrestle against flesh*

and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.