

7. The Authority of the Believer

The War Against Satan and Demons

Every Believer is an Ambassador.

In approaching a subject such as the authority of God, we need to understand that every believer has this authority and not just those whom we may consider being “super saints!” It is God’s will for all His children to know how to walk in His authority, and training starts the day we say “yes” to Christ Jesus. The Holy Spirit is moving throughout the earth, and as His children, we need to be involved and cooperate with God as we learn to walk with Him. As God’s Kingdom people, we seek to do the will of the Father just as Jesus did. Every child of God can pull down strongholds of the enemy, Satan, in their town, city, or village. The call goes out to whoever will take God at His Word and move forward in faith. He leads His children one step at a time, but we rest on Christ’s authority, not our own. Let me illustrate what faith in God can do when men and women step out in the power of God with a story from the book, *Megashift*. Author James Rutz writes about three unknown believers who acted in faith and, in so doing, changed the spiritual atmosphere in Africa.

In 1999, three Bushmen from the Kalahari Desert changed history. They were not movers and shakers of society but poor illiterates who laced strips of leather to the bottoms of their feet whenever they needed “shoes.” However, they stood out from the crowd in three ways:

1. They knew God and his plan to transform Africa.
2. Through conversations with readers and researchers, they discovered how Africa became known as the *Dark Continent*, the home of the world's poorest nations.
3. Thinking in sync with the Spirit of God, they determined that the continent had had enough of misery, and it was high time to take a stand and reverse the curse.

They found a curse that lay at the root of the problem. Archeologists and anthropologists pieced together a coherent picture of how Africa was settled and encultured through ancient pottery shards, cave art, etc. Long ago, the original settlers came down very slowly from the North through the Great Rift Valley, a geological crack that runs from the Sea of Galilee in Israel down through Africa. Wherever they set up communities, they made pacts with the local gods—actually demons—putting themselves under the authority of these evil powers. The results have been massive and ghastly. However, the Bushmen knew what to do. They organized a prayer expedition to conduct Spiritual Warfare.

Calling together a team of experienced prayer intercessors, including some westerners, they journeyed north 5,000 miles for three months, starting in July at Cape Agulhas, the southernmost tip of Africa. They renounced and broke the original deals with demons and curses at numerous old sites, mainly along the Rift Valley. Every prayer session at every stop was what we call a **power confrontation**. By far, the biggest came in Zimbabwe. After a very long, rough ride in jeeps, the team arrived at Mount Injalele (in-ja-lay-lee) in the Motobo Hills. Though remote, the region was a popular destination for pilgrims; many were presidents, kings, or tribal chiefs. For many years, they had come to Injalele to seek advice and guidance. There, an "oracle" supposedly spoke to them out of a large crack on the backside of the mountain.

You can safely assume that any advice from the crack was of inferior quality. Over the years, it became such a busy shrine that the witch doctor network across Southern Africa had built four temples around the edges of the crack. So, the team prayed. They worshipped God. They repented for the sins of the people in worshipping demonic gods. They vociferously decreed the downfall of the evil powers and declared ownership of the land transferred to the kingdom of Christ. Then, they went to the next stop. Shortly afterward, God hit and hit hard. *Lightning struck all four* of the temples and entirely incinerated them! As you can imagine, it was all over the region's newspapers and on everyone's lips.

Within two days, the most respected witch doctor in the whole of Southern Africa arrived to assess the damage and see what could be done to restore the site. Though it was a cloudless day, *he was struck by lightning and killed on the spot*. Then came the storm. You may have seen the damage reports on CNN World News. The most torrential rains in memory lashed a vast region, washing away whole villages and especially devastating the occult sites and numerous witchcraft training centers. However, the same storm system made the Kalahari blossom like a garden in the western areas. Many Christians lived there, and the land became transformed into a greenhouse of trees, lush grass, blooming plants, flowing streams, and wild game—virtually unseen for at least a century. The locals were awestruck, and the fear of the Lord fell on the whole territory.¹

When you hear this story, it sounds similar to the powerful encounter the prophet Elijah had with the prophets of Baal (1 Kings 18). When I look at this modern story of the power of God, what first stands out to me is that these were ordinary people who were merely obedient to the Holy Spirit. Secondly, they stood together and did not engage in this ministry alone. That is the New Testament pattern. Thirdly, they were individuals who knew how to pray and act in obedience to the revealed will of God. Sometimes we make things so complicated, but it does not have to be that way. The Scriptures teach that this is the inheritance of every child of God. This kind of deliverance power is the "children's bread" (Matthew 15:26) part of the covenant Christ bought for us at the cross. The Father will give us His instruction if we ask Him and listen to his guidance and voice.

The Family Business

When you know you are accepted in the beloved (Ephesians 1:6) and have God's approval, you can move in spiritual authority because you know from where the power comes. People often find a more intimate walk with God merely because of being engaged with Christ in His work. **Don't you know that we are called into the Family Business?** I was only six years old when I first went with my father on his fishing boat, the *Why Worry*. I remember him standing me on a box and helping me steer the boat. He took me just a few hundred yards from the harbor at first, and later on, when I was in my teens, he taught me to navigate, steer the boat, and do all of the tasks I saw him perform.

¹ James Rutz, *Megashift*, written by Published by Empowerment Press, Pages 56-57.

We live in days when God is accelerating His work as we see the world around us becoming increasingly spiritually dark. God promises that, as the darkness increases, so will the light of God (Isaiah 59:19). The Father needs "all hands on deck" to pull up the nets.

Question 1) Have you ever been in a situation where you felt out of your depth in something you were asked to do? How did you overcome your inadequacies and become more comfortable?

In my early days as a fisherman off the East coast of England, a person didn't need a license to operate a boat or fish. When people looked at how young I was and the size of the boat that I was working on, they naturally questioned my competency. However, if I told them who my dad was and that I was working with him, their attitude changed immediately, as my dad was well known in the whole region, all along the East Coast of England. I had the authority to operate his boat and to catch fish. Because of the relationship Christ has brought believers, we are authorized to go out onto the fishing grounds and catch men and women for God. Your Father has given you his permission and His blessing.

¹⁸Then Jesus came to them and said, "**All authority** in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹**Therefore go and make disciples** of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and the Holy Spirit, ²⁰and **teaching them to obey** everything I have commanded you. And **surely I am with you always**, to the very end of the age" (Matthew 28:18-20).

Because Christ has been given authority in heaven and earth, He shares that authority with us who believe in Him. We are seated with Him in heavenly places (Ephesians 2:6), and the Lord will be with us as we go, just as my dad taught me bit by bit by on-the-job training. The Lord has given gifted leaders to teach the Scriptures and train others by watching them do what they do. That is the way Jesus did ministry. The enemy does not want you to believe that you are also given authority, for his kingdom will lose ground when you start to live in dependence on God's power. The authority that is given to Christ now also rests on all believers (Acts 2:38-39; Matthew 28:18). In the thirteen letters of Paul the Apostle, the phrase *in Christ, in Him*, or related terms, occurs 165 times. I think Paul is trying to communicate an essential truth about something, don't you? Let's explore that:

For we were **all baptized by one Spirit** so as **to form one body**--whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free--and we were all given the one Spirit to drink (1 Corinthians 12:13).

When you believed and placed your trust in Christ, the simple truth of the above statement was that the Spirit of God came and took up residence in the temple of your heart, your spirit (John 3:3). You that belong to Christ are in an organic union with the God of the universe (John 17:22-23). Later on, Paul restates his thought when he says, "**Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it**" (1 Corinthians 12:27). In the same way that Jesus is the Vine, and we are the branches (John 15:5), we have been grafted into this spiritual union with God (Romans 11:24), what Paul calls being *in Christ Jesus*. To be in Christ is to be in an organic relationship and joined to Christ, while at the same time also in spiritual union with brothers and sisters in Christ all over the world.

From him [Christ] the whole body, **joined** and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work (Ephesians 4:16).

Restored Authority

When our ancestor, Adam, was created, he was made in the image of God and given dominion over the earth. He was also given the responsibility to rule over all that God had made:

²⁶Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them **rule** over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, **over all the earth**, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." ²⁷So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. ²⁸God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. **Rule** over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground." (Genesis 1:26-28 Emphasis mine).

The Hebrew word, *radah*, translated into English with "rule," means to "rule over or subdue."² God gave responsibility and authority over all creation to Adam and his descendants. I presume that even the king of the beasts, the lion, could be spoken to by man under God's authority and that the lion would obey. Such was the dominion and authority that man had before the fall in the Garden of Eden. King David, speaking by the Spirit, says something very similar:

³When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon, and the stars, which you have set in place, ⁴what is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him? ⁵You made him a little lower than the **heavenly beings** and **crowned him with glory and honor**. ⁶You made him **ruler** over the works of your hands; **you put everything under his feet** (Psalm 8:3-6 Emphasis mine).

The Hebrew word, *mashal*, translated with the English word, "ruler," in Psalm 8, verse 6, indicates that Adam and we as his descendants are God's managers, governors, or stewards over the earth. *Mashal* means to "rule, reign, govern, have dominion over and manage."³ Humanity was different from the rest of the created beings due to being crowned with glory and honor and made ruler over the earth. He alone was created in the image of God and could rule with grace and true justice. He was God's representative. He was created in the image of God, showing forth the likeness of the One True God, representing God's heart and will for His creation. Under the inspiration of the Spirit in the verses above, King David wrote that man in his original creation was made a little lower than *Elohim*, the Hebrew word for God. Many translations render this word differently, and some translate it merely with the English words *heavenly beings*, but Scripture says that Adam was made just a little lower than God. "*Elohim*" is the word almost always used for God. Some translations record the change by putting it into notes at the bottom of the page or the margins. How magnificent Adam must have been, crowned with glory and

²Key Word Study Bible, AMG Publishers, Chattanooga, TN. Page 1550.

³ Ibid, Page 1530.

honor, fully equipped by God for his managerial role over the earth. The passage says that God put everything on Earth under Adam's feet, symbolizing rulership and dominion over all creation (v. 6).

The highest heavens belong to the LORD, but the earth he has **given** to man (Psalm 115:16 Emphasis mine).

The Hebrew word, *Nathan*, translated with the English word “given,” means to assign. God gave responsibility for the Earth to Adam and his descendants. It is the territory over which man is assigned to rule. Scripture is clear that the earth belongs to the Lord, but it has been entrusted to humankind to govern and manage. This thought of humanity given responsibility is also brought out in Genesis 2:15: “**Then the Lord God took the man and put him into the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.**” The Hebrew word, *shamar*, translated with the English words, “take care of,” means: “to keep, guard, protect and preserve, as a watchman cares for his cattle or sheep.” The governing and stewardship of earth were assigned to Adam and his race.

Question 2) Using the definition of the word, *Shamar*; “to keep, guard, protect and preserve,” with what do you imagine Adam's race was to do with such authority? What did it mean for Adam and Eve to have dominion over the earth?

As we have already said in a previous study, this dominion of man, I believe, was short-lived. Satan was quick to usurp and steal man's authority and rulership over the earth. Our forefather, Adam, gave away humanity's right and dominion to rule into the hands of Satan at the fall. Satan, with impunity, could say to Christ at the temptation, “**I will give you all their authority and splendor, for it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to**” (Luke 4:6). Satan was not offering Jesus something that he did not have. If so, this would not have been a temptation. Satan was offering Jesus something in his hands to use as leverage. He sought to tempt Christ to bypass the cross by bowing to him, acting outside of the Father's will.

This loss of our rulership and dominion given to us by God is why redemption had to come through a man because God gave the earth to Adam's race, and only one of his race could win it back, for man was the trustee. Once Adam succumbed to Satan's temptation to obey him rather than God, the enemy could legally do anything he wanted to any of Adam's progeny because they became slaves of Satan due to humanity's slavery to sin. All it took was one act of disobedience. God came Himself, the Lord Jesus, the only One totally without sin, and Satan had no claim on Him. That's why Christ had to be born of a virgin. It is no wonder that the concept of the virgin birth is under attack and something the enemy wants to refute as foolish. It is an essential element in the redemption story. The Messiah, the Christ, had to be one of Adam's race, but sin could not taint him; otherwise, having Adam's nature, He would have been owned and dominated by Satan.

Christ was 100% man but 100% God, conceived in Mary by the Holy Spirit, not having Adam's seed or sin-nature. Satan, therefore, had no claim on the innocent Christ. Divine law says that “**Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God has God made man**” (Genesis 9:6). In other words, when Satan took it upon himself to bring Jesus to the cross, for the first time under divine law, he became a murderer because Jesus was completely innocent, having never sinned. In the upper room just before the crucifixion, Jesus

said, "I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of his world is coming. He has no claim on me" (John 14:30). Every man that makes Christ's death his own by believing and trusting in His death to be the payment for his sin is made righteous before God. Eternal justice was satisfied at the cross. Satan was legally condemned as a murderer in the courts of heaven because he had no right to kill Jesus due to His sinless birth and life. He was stripped of the keys of death and hell at the cross (Revelation 1:18). Just before the crucifixion, Jesus said:

Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out (John 12:31).

Question 3) What do you think would happen if all Christians everywhere would grasp their God-given authority in Christ? What differences, in your opinion, would this make for individuals and the Church worldwide?

His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the **rulers** and **authorities in the heavenly realms** [the original Greek language says, "in the heavenlies"] (Ephesians 3:10).

Satan and his angels and demons do not want you to understand the full implications of the verse above. If I understand it correctly, Paul is saying that it is God's intent and plan for you and me, the Church, to stand in total opposition against demonic rulers and authorities that are invisible around us. We are to declare to them through our faith in God that they no longer have any legal ground on which to stand, that this territory belongs to God, and they must surrender their rule and leave. Christ died for you, and as you to win back the dominion and authority we were given at the creation! He died not only to buy you out of Satan's power by His death on the cross but also to empower you to stand as a soldier of Christ in entire opposition to every evil work around you. We can begin to take the authority Christ has given us and rule over evil rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms. Jesus said: "**All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations...teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you**" (Matthew 28:18-20). What did Christ teach them and command them to do? He commanded them to heal the sick, cast out demons, and preach the gospel (Luke 9:1-2, Luke 10:9, 17).

Anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing...You may ask me for anything in my name and I will do it (John 14:12-14).

Theologians call this doctrine of every believer having authority from God given to him, The Priesthood of All Believers. Satan has no legal right of ownership over us. Paul the apostle wrote, "**For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves**" (Colossians 1:13). The legal authority Satan once had over us is destroyed. Only our unbelief stops the flow of the Holy Spirit's power and authority through us. God chose the weak things of the world to confound the strong (1 Corinthians 1:27). Do you feel inadequate? Then God has chosen you to glorify Him by using you!

By His death on the cross, Jesus nullified every claim Satan had against any of us that are in Christ. The authority that Satan once exercised against us has passed to the Lord Jesus Christ and

all who are in covenant relationship with Him, i.e., the Body of Christ, the church of the Living God. We are to exercise His authority under the leadership and empowerment of the Holy Spirit. No matter how young or how old we are, we who belong to Christ are made ambassadors of God (2 Corinthians 5:20). In a legal and spiritual sense, we are to exercise a power of attorney to bring God's will to be done upon the earth. Our unbelief is what stops us from exercising our authority. In the same way that electricity flows over copper cable, faith is the channel to the authority and power of God to see healings and other supernatural phenomena. Are we going to believe the lies of Satan or the truth of the Word of God?

Our Birthright as Children of God

It is one thing to know these truths intellectually, but God wants to teach us truth experientially. He desires to bring His Word from our heads to our spirit. **“Surely you desire truth in the inner parts; you teach me wisdom in the inmost place” (Psalm 51:6)**. Peter knew intellectually, just like the other eleven disciples, that Jesus could stop him from sinking into the water if he got out of the security of the boat and walked on water (Matthew 14:29). Still, he was the only one of the twelve that got out of the boat and experienced the Lord in a new way. Understanding the truth of God's power and authority and assimilating it (grasping or picking it up) will change the dynamic of your life and those around you.

The Bible says that God has given each believer a measure of faith (Romans 12:3). Along with the measure of faith, He also gave various gifts of the Spirit that God may use each of us to build up one another's faith: **“Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good” (1 Corinthians 12:7)**. After Paul went through a list of different gifts that the Spirit gives the body of Christ, he wrote:

All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines (1 Corinthians 12:11).

Our lives would be so different if only we could view ourselves the way God sees us and step out of the security of our boats! The enemy's hand is heavily involved in sowing thoughts into our minds that there is nothing special about us and that there was no change in our lives when we became Christians. Satan wants to shut a tight lid on us from ever believing what the Scripture says about us, i.e., that we are more than sons of Adam trapped in our sinful lifestyle. We are His children, saints of the Most High God! We are invested with authority and power to destroy the works of the devil just as our Master did. The Scripture says, **“The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work” (1 John 3:8)**. The authority and power of our King, Christ Jesus, is behind us as we represent Him in this world, speaking His Word and doing His works. The Lord is ever looking for His people to express their faith in Him:

Faith honors and pleases God more than anything else (Hebrews 11:6). How often do we stop short of receiving all He has for us merely because we do not persist in prayer, going beyond what seem like barriers to persevere in faith?

Question 4) What keeps many in the Body of Christ from exercising God's authority?

We know that manifestation of the Spirit's work is available to each child of God. We have not because we ask not (James 4:2). The problem is not on God's end. He has told us that He will confirm His Word with signs accompanying it (Mark 16:20). We have not because we do not ask in faith. Demons shudder every time a child of God begins to ask God to move supernaturally. When you start to pray, all hell breaks loose to hinder your prayer life, but we must persist in prayer. Once a child of God begins to see what power and authority are available to him, the demons and their deceptive game of keeping him believing that he has no power and authority are over. Power and authority over demons is one's right as a child of God!

I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you (Luke 10:19).

¹⁷And these signs will accompany ***those who believe: In my name they will drive out demons***; they will speak in new tongues; ¹⁸they will pick up snakes with their hands; and when they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all; ***they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well*** (Mark 16:17-18. Emphasis mine).

It doesn't mean that we are to go looking for demons. Jesus did the work of His Father, and when there was opposition, He dealt with it. In doing the kingdom's work, we will encounter resistance, but we will have the authority to deal with the opposition as we go with the gospel.

Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom (Luke 12: 32).

I want to leave you with this promise. If you are a believer in Christ, you are in the Family Business, and just like the three unknown bushmen that dared to exercise God's authority to change the spiritual climate of Africa, we are His ambassadors, to speak His Word, and do His works.

Prayer: Father, I pray that You would fill me and equip me to take up the authority You have given me to a needy world. Come afresh to me, Lord Jesus. I believe—help me overcome my unbelief. Please teach me how to walk with You and do Your work.

Keith Thomas.

Email: keiththomas@groupbiblestudy.com

Website: www.groupbiblestudy.com