

AUTHORITY OF THE BELIEVER

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In today's session I want to talk about the authority God has given us as believers. In order to address this, we're going to have to deal not only with the authority we have but the authority of Satan. He has been blown out of proportion. Christians have been led to believe we are fighting a being whose power is superior to ours, and we are just barely able to cope with him. That's not what the Scripture teaches at all. It does say in Ephesians 6:12, "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." So Satan is a factor; he does exist. He has a hierarchy of principalities and powers that we're dealing with, but in the verse just prior to that it says that we have to stand against the wiles of the devil. The only power Satan really has against us is deception. He doesn't have power to just overcome us.

In Genesis 3 we see that when the first temptation came against Adam and Eve, Satan didn't come with some superior force. For instance, instead of inhabiting a mammoth or an elephant, putting his foot on Adam's head, threatening them, and saying, "Serve me or else," he inhabited a snake, the most subtle creature God made. The word "subtle" means "sly, deceptive, or cunning." The reason Satan came through the snake was because he really didn't have the power to force Adam and Eve to do anything, he could only deceive. He came against the nature and character of God and began to criticize Him, saying, "God doesn't really love you—He's holding things back from you." He used deception to tempt Adam and Eve to sin against God. They were the ones who had all the authority, and the reason Satan had to do it this way was because he didn't have power to come against God.

There's so much more I don't have time to go in to, but one of the main points I want to get across is that when we talk about the authority of the believer, you have to recognize that Satan has zero power and authority over you. He is a defeated foe. His only power against you is to come against you with lies and deception. If your life is being destroyed, you can say, "Satan is the one who is firing these shots at me," but you are the one who is giving him the ammunition. You're the one who has to respond to his lies and deception. If we didn't yield to Satan, he would have no inroads or power against us. In 2 Corinthians 10:3-5 it says, "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." These scriptures are talking about the weapons of our warfare, and every weapon mentioned refers to our mind, dealing with thoughts.

Satan is a factor, and he came and tempted Jesus, but he didn't come with some superior power to fight Him. Instead, he came with words and tried to tempt Jesus and deceive Him. He told Jesus, "If you'll fall down and worship me, I'll give you all these things." The truth is, they weren't his to give. God's the one that owned everything. Jesus already owned everything by right of creation but He had laid down His right as Creator to become a man (Who, [Jesus] being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men" Philippians 2:6-7). In doing this He showed us how a man can stand against Satan with the Word of God. Satan was trying to trick and deceive Him, which is exactly

what the verses in 2 Corinthians chapter 10 are dealing with. The weapons of our warfare are to deal with our thought life, to take captive and bring under control every thought into obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ. We're the ones who have authority. Satan doesn't have the power to destroy your lives. He doesn't have the power to make you sick, to make you depressed, or to take away your joy and peace. He doesn't have the power to force you to be angry. Satan doesn't have the power to do anything to you except through deception. You're the one who has been given all authority in heaven and in earth.

I want to quickly summarize some things. In the beginning God, of course, had all authority. All power and authority has to emanate from God, because He is the only one who has power in Himself. Everything else is delegated from Him. When He created the heavens and the earth, He had all power and authority. Then in Genesis 1:26, when God created Adam and Eve, He said, "Let them have dominion . . . over all the earth." Put that together with Psalm 115:16, which says, "The heaven, even the heavens, are the LORD'S: but the earth hath he given to the children of men." God had ownership of everything by right of being the Creator, but He gave dominion, or authority, over the earth to physical human beings. Satan has never had the right and power to rule over the earth. He took it through deceiving man to sin. God gave that power to mankind, and when man fell, he yielded his God-given authority and power over to the devil. Satan was never given power by God to oppress man or to rule this earth.

Scripture does say that Satan is the god of this world, but it's not because God made him the god of this world. God never put Satan in a position above mankind. He gave mankind dominion and authority over this earth. The only reason Satan has ever been able to oppress, dominate, or cause the problems he does is because people yielded their God-given authority to him. This posed a real problem for God because He was a Spirit, and He had given authority over this earth to physical human beings. Only people who had a physical body had the authority and power to rule and exercise influence in this earth. Satan had to come to us and get us to yield our authority to him. That's the reason that he likes to inhabit a body. In Scripture, demons had to have a body to possess, because Satan can't do anything unless he is using a physical human body to work through. Because God was a Spirit and had given authority to physical human beings, now in a sense He had His hands tied. It wasn't because God didn't have power and authority but because of His integrity. He gave authority to physical human beings, and to be true to His own word, He couldn't just take it back and say, "This isn't the way I wanted it; time out, stop, we're going to do it over." No, God bound Himself by His own word. Throughout history He looked for someone He could flow through, but the problem was that all men were corrupted and had yielded themselves to Satan. So what was He to do?

What God finally did was come to the earth Himself and become a man. This is tremendous when you understand it, because now the devil was in big trouble. He had been using mankind's power, and God couldn't intervene directly to solve all these problems, because man was willfully, legally yielding his God-given authority to Satan. Satan was wrong in what he did, but man gave him the authority and power that was theirs to give. But now, here came God, and He was no longer only the Spirit but was in the form of physical flesh. This put the devil in a bad situation because God not only had authority in heaven, but becoming a man gave Him authority on the earth. Jesus said in John 5:26-27, "For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself; And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man." He was referring to His physical body.

Jesus came and exercised God-given authority—the devil tempted Him, and He never yielded to him—and Satan lost in every battle with Jesus. He took our sins, died for them, went to hell, rose again, and said in Matthew 28:18, "All authority is given unto me in heaven and in earth." He won back the

authority God had given mankind and man misused, and as God in the flesh, He now had all authority in heaven and in earth. In the very next verse He said, “Now you go, and you do these things.” In effect He was saying, “I now have all authority in heaven and earth, and I’m sharing it with you.” This time, however, there’s a unique difference in the authority God has given back to us as believers. It is joint authority between us and the Lord Jesus Christ. It’s no longer given to us solely as it was to Adam and Eve. They could give the authority away, allow the devil to oppress them, and basically be hopeless, but today our authority is shared with the Lord Jesus Christ. It’s like having a joint bank account that requires both signatures in order to cash a check. Our authority is shared with the Lord Jesus, and His authority is shared with the church.

Although we may fail, God is never again going to sign this authority over to the devil. Satan is absolutely powerless. He has no ability to do anything in your life except what he deceives you in and what you voluntarily yield to. You may give him authority in your life, you may suffer personally for it, but the God-given authority that was given to man will never again pass solely to the devil. It is now shared between us and the Lord Jesus, and He will remain faithful regardless. You need to recognize that you’re the one who now has authority and the power. Satan is fighting you with thoughts, and your weapons are such that you can take these thoughts captive. You can recognize that it’s wrong for the devil to oppress you physically and find out what the Scripture has to say about healing. John 8:32 says, “And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” You can find out what the Scripture has to say about your prosperity and how to prosper—how to walk in the things of God. You’re the one who has power and authority. God has given it to you, and the only thing that keeps you from exercising it is that you haven’t yet taken your thoughts captive. You haven’t used these spiritual weapons to renew your mind and to realize what you have. It’s encouraging to find out that you’re one with authority and power.

I pray that you’ll take this, meditate on it, and God will give you the revelation that you’re the one Satan trembles at. You shouldn’t be trembling at Satan because you are the one who has God-given power and authority. The One who has already been to hell—defeated it—knocked the gates loose—and has the keys of death and hell dangling at his side now lives on the inside of you. You’re the one who has the authority. If you resist the devil, he will flee from you (James 4:7).

AUTHORITY OF THE BELIEVER (Outline)

Ephesians 6:11-12: “Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. ¹²For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.”

Satan does exist, but his only real power is deception.

Genesis 3:1: “Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?”

Satan entered into a serpent, the most subtle animal God created. Adam and Eve were the ones with all the authority. Satan had no power to come against God. Satan used lies about God’s nature to cause Adam and Eve to sin against God. Satan has zero power, or authority, against us. His only power is in deception.

2 Corinthians 10:3-5, “For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: ⁴(For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds): ⁵Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.”

The weapons of our warfare are to deal with our thought life. Satan came with words to tempt and deceive Jesus.

Genesis 1:26: “And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.”

God is the only one who has power in Himself. Everything else is delegated from Him.

Psalms 115:16: “The heaven, even the heavens, are the LORD’S: but the earth hath he given to the children of men.”

God has ownership of the earth by His right as Creator, but He gave rulership of it to physical human beings. Man yielded his God-given authority to Satan in the garden when Satan deceived him. Satan can only cause the problems he does because people have yielded their God-given authority to him. Satan, because he is a spirit being like God, needs to use a physical body to flow through. Only people who have a physical body have the authority to exercise influence on the earth. God couldn't find a man to flow through because they had all yielded themselves to Satan, so He Himself came as a man.

John 5:27: "And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man."

Because God became a man in Jesus, it gave Him authority in the earth. Satan tempted Jesus, but Jesus never yielded to Him.

Matthew 28:18-19, "And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. ¹⁹Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

All the authority that God had originally given to mankind was won back by Jesus. Then He shared that authority with us. In this joint authority, we may fail, but God will never sign His authority over to the devil. Jesus will remain faithful. YOU have authority and power. The only thing keeping it from being exercised in your life is that you haven't taken your thoughts captive to the truth.

James 4:7: "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."

Satan trembles at you because you are the one with the God-given authority. YOU resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

AUTHORITY OF THE BELIEVER (Teacher's Guide)

1.
 - A. Satan does exist, but his real power exists in his ability to deceive us. According to Genesis 3:1, what did the serpent (the devil) try to get Eve to question?

God's Word (Has God indeed said?).
 - B. Why did Satan use deception?

He could not make them disobey by force. He had to deceive them to give up their authority.
2. Who gave man authority according to Genesis 1:26, 28?

God.
3. How did God create man before the fall?

With dominion of the works of His (God's) hands.
4.
 - A. What does 2 Corinthians 4:4 indicate happened?

That Satan took man's authority and became god of the world.
 - B. Does Matthew 4:8-9 strengthen this point?

Yes.
5.
 - A. After Jesus' death and resurrection, who now has all authority in heaven and in earth?

Matthew 28:18—Jesus.
 - B. To whom has authority been delegated to according to Matthew 28:19?

The believer.
6. Ephesians 1:19 says that the exceeding greatness of God's power is toward whom?

To us who believe.

AUTHORITY OF THE BELIEVER (Detailed Teacher's Guide)

Note: The following information may be read out loud (a numbered section at a time) with the person(s) being disciplined. After each numbered section is read, pause and ask the question(s) that correspond to the paragraph(s), and then discuss them.

¹ Jesus had authority because of His humanity. God is a Spirit (John 4:24), and when He created this physical world and all of its inhabitants, He gave mankind authority to rule and subdue His creation (Genesis 1:26, 28; Psalms 8:4-8; 115:16). Although God still owned the universe and all that was in it (Exodus 9:29; Psalms 24:1; 89:11), He gave the control of the earth to man.

When man sinned, Satan usurped man's authority and became the god of this world (2 Corinthians 4:4). God did not ordain all the terrible things that have happened throughout history, and yet He did not take back authority to dominate the earth. Instead, He became a man (1 Timothy 3:16) and took back that authority to Himself by conquest. After Jesus' resurrection, He said in Matthew 28:18, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth," and then He gave the great commission to His disciples, thereby conferring that authority upon them also. Jesus becoming flesh was absolutely essential for gaining all power (or authority) in heaven and in earth.

² In Ephesians 1:19, this exceeding greatness of God's power is toward us. That means that it is for us and our benefit. Some people get glimpses of God's power, but very few have the revelation that it is for us and at our disposal. It doesn't do us any good to believe that God has power if we don't believe that it will work for us.

This great power of God is effectual only for those who believe. We must believe to receive, or if we doubt, we do without.

¹(a) What does Genesis 1:26, 28 tell us about man's authority?

(b) What does Psalm 8:6-8 tell us about man's authority?

(c) What is Satan called in 2 Corinthians 4:4?

²Ephesians 1:19 says the exceeding greatness of God's power is toward whom?

³The phrase “according to” in Ephesians 1:19 means “to the proportion or degree that” (see Ephesians 1:4). The point that is being made is that the power that every believer in Christ now has is the same power that God the Father used to raise Christ from the dead. We don’t just have a little bit of power from God. We have the same power that God used to raise Jesus from the dead. It is more than enough power to accomplish God’s will in our lives.

(Ephesians 1:21) The power that is now working in believers is the same power that worked in Christ to raise Him from the dead (Ephesians 1:20). Everything we have as believers in Christ comes from our union with Him. Therefore, what is true of Him is true of us too. So, in the same way that Jesus is now “above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion” so are we.

This is one of the greatest passages in the New Testament on the authority of the believer. In this passage we see that we have come to share in Christ’s throne, to partake in the authority that the throne represents, and to exercise divine power and dominion. There is no place in the New Testament that we are told to ask God to do something about the devil, but rather the church is told to do something about the devil. This is because delegated authority has been given to the church over the works of the enemy. Paul’s prayer is that the church may be enlightened to this truth.

⁴Paul also uses the analogy of the church being the body of Christ in his letter to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians. 12:12-27, and 15:25-28). He expounds on this in Ephesians 1:22-23 by placing Christ as the head and the church as the body. This is emphasizing the Lordship of Christ over the church just as the head dictates and controls the physical body.

When anything is placed under the feet of a person, then every single part of that person’s body is positioned above it. This illustrates that this resurrection power is not just a reality for Christ, our Head, but for every member of Christ’s body.

What an amazing statement we find here of our union with Christ Jesus. Paul states, “The church is Christ’s body, the completion of Him” (TEV). Just as a ship is not complete without its crew, just as a king is not complete without his kingdom, Jesus Christ has chosen to be incomplete without His church, “His body, filled with Himself. . .” (LB).

³(a) Compare Ephesians 1:19-21 with Ephesians 6:12. What do these verses show us? That we have authority over the devil.

(b) What does Mark 16:17 tell us to do about the devil?

(c) What does James 4:7 tell us to do about the devil?

⁴(a) If Christ is the head of the body, what does that imply? (Ephesians 1:22) That He is in control, we are His instrument. The head also contains the mind.

(b) According to Matthew 28:18-20, what is Jesus giving us authority to do?

AUTHORITY OF THE BELIEVER (Discipleship Questions)

Dominion: force, strength, might, power, authority, liberty of action, lordship.

Read Genesis 1:26-28

1. In whose likeness is man made?
2. What did God give us dominion over?
 - A. _____
 - B. _____
 - C. _____
 - D. _____
 - E. _____
3. "So God created man in His _____ image."
4. How did God bless man?
 - A. _____
 - B. _____
 - C. _____

Read Genesis 3:1

5. How is the serpent described in this verse?
6. What did the serpent (devil) try to get Eve to question?
7. What does Satan try to get us to question still today?
8. Why do you think Satan doesn't want you to believe the Word of God?

Read Psalm 8:6-8

9. What did God give man dominion over?
10. What did God put under man's feet?

Read Psalm 115:16

11. To whom does heaven belong?
12. What did God give to the children of men?

Read 2 Corinthians 4:3-4

13. To whom is the gospel veiled, or hidden from?
14. What has Satan, or the god of this age, done to their minds?

Read 2 Corinthians 3:16

15. What happens to the veil when someone turns to the Lord?

Read Ephesians 4:17-19 (AMP)

16. How are we commanded to no longer live?
17. If we choose to not turn to the Lord, what has happened to our understanding and reasoning?
A. _____ B. _____
18. Why are we alienated from the life of God?
A. _____
B. _____
19. What is the result of attaining “spiritual apathy” (AMP)?
20. Who is responsible for you being given over to lewdness, uncleanness, and greed?
21. “Who, being past feeling, have given _____ over to lewdness...”
22. Did the devil make you do it? Or You chose of your own free will?

Read Matthew 28:18-20

23. To whom has all authority in heaven and earth been given?
24. What has Christ commanded us to do?
25. Whose name are we to baptize them in? The name of _____, _____, and _____.
26. What are we to teach them?
27. What is the final promise at the end of verse 20?

Read Mark 16:15-18

28. In verses 17 and 18, we are told what we, as believers in Jesus Christ, have been given authority through Christ to do. List them.

- A. _____
- B. _____
- C. _____
- D. _____
- E. _____

29. In Whose name are we to do these things?

30. Does it say anything about our doing it in our own power?

Read Ephesians 1:17-21

31. What two things does Paul pray that we as believers might have (verse 17)?

- A. _____
- B. _____

32. Why does he pray that the eyes of our understanding would be enlightened? (v18-19)

- A. _____
- B. _____
- C. _____

33. In verse 19, Whose power is being talked about here?

34. Where is that power directed, toward those who believe or anybody? (circle one)

35. This same great power that is directed toward us is the same power that did what, according to verse 20?

- A. _____
- B. _____

36. God placed Jesus above all...(v21)

- A. _____ B. _____
- C. _____ D. _____
- E. _____

Read Ephesians 6:12-13

37. Compare this list of things we wrestle with the list of all that Jesus has been given authority of in number 36 above. Are they similar?

38. What are we commanded to do in verse 13?
39. Why are we to put on the full armor of God?
40. We are told to put on the full armor of God in order to STAND (not fall and be defeated) against the devil. Can you see that God has promised victory and protection for us from all evil if we will but believe and stand with His Son Jesus Christ?

Read James 4:7

41. What are we to do toward the devil?
42. If we resist him, what will he do?

Read Luke 10:19

43. What has Jesus given us the authority to do?

A. _____

B. _____

44. Shall anything hurt us?

Read Colossians 1:13

45. Has God delivered us already, or is it yet to come?
46. If we have already been delivered, and God has already defeated the devil, then all we must do is walk in His authority, which He gave to us. YES NO

Read Romans 8:16-17

47. Are we children of God?
48. Are we heirs of God?
49. If we are heirs of God, what are we with Jesus?
50. If we are joint-heirs with Jesus, does that mean we have access to all authority through Him?

51. Read Revelation 1:18
What does Jesus hold the keys to?

Read Colossians 2:15
52. What three things did Christ do to all principalities and powers?

- A. _____
- B. _____
- C. _____

Read 2 Timothy 1:7
53. What has God not given to us?

What has He given to us instead?

- A. _____
- B. _____
- C. _____

AUTHORITY OF THE BELIEVER
(Discipleship Questions)

1. God said "Let us make man in our image and after our likeness."
2. A. Fish
B. Birds
C. Cattle
D. Creeping things
E. All the earth
3. Own
4. A. Be fruitful and multiply
B. Fill the earth and subdue it
C. Have dominion over every living thing
5. As more cunning than any beast of the field
6. God's Word
7. God's Word
8. Because it is powerful and can destroy him
9. The works of His hands
10. All things
11. The Lord
12. The earth
13. Those who are perishing
14. Blinded them
15. It is taken away
16. In the futility of your mind
17. A. Darkened
B. Beclouded
18. A. Because of ignorance within us
B. Blindness of our hearts
19. To be given to lewdness to work all uncleanness with greediness
20. Myself
21. Themselves
22. Chose of own own free will
23. Jesus
24. Go and make disciples of all nations
25. Father, Son, and Holy Ghost
26. To observe all things Christ has commanded
27. He is with us always
28. A. Cast out demons
B. Speak with new tongues
C. Take up serpents
D. Divine protection
E. Heal the sick
29. Jesus'
30. No
31. A. The spirit of Wisdom
B. The spirit of Revelation
32. A. That you may know the hope of your calling
B. What are the riches of the glory of His inheritance.
C. The exceeding greatness of His power toward us

33. Jesus'
34. Toward those who believe
35. A. That raised Jesus from the dead
B. And seated Him at the right hand of God
36. A. Principalities
B. Power
C. Might
D. Dominion
E. Every name that is named
37. Yes
38. Take up the whole armor of God
39. To withstand in the evil day
40. Yes
41. Resist him
42. Flee from us
43. A. To trample on serpents and scorpions
B. And over all the power of the enemy
44. No
45. Delivered us already
46. Yes
47. Yes
48. Yes
49. Joint-Heirs
50. Yes
51. Of death and Hades (hell)
52. a. He disarmed them
b. He made a spectacle of them
c. He triumphed over them
53. A spirit of fear
54. A. Power
B. Love
C. Sound mind

AUTHORITY OF THE BELIEVER (Additional Information)

Ephesians 1:19-23: “And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, ²⁰Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places. ²¹Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: ²²And hath put all things under his feet and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, ²³Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.”

(Ephesians 1:19-23) The power that is now working in believers is the same power that worked in Christ to raise Him from the dead. Everything we have as believers in Christ comes from our union with Him. Therefore, what is true of Him is true of us too. So, in the same way that Jesus is now “above all principality, and power, and might and dominion” so are we.

This is one of the greatest passages in the New Testament on the authority of the believer. In this passage we see that we have come to share in Christ’s throne, to partake in the authority that the throne represents, and to exercise divine power and dominion. There is no place in the New Testament that we are told to ask God to do something about the devil, but rather the church is told to do something about the devil. This is because delegated authority has been given to the church over the works of the enemy. Paul’s prayer is that the church may be enlightened to this truth.

In Acts 3:6 Peter said, “Such as I have give I thee.” Peter and John knew what they had. They had been given the power and ability of Jesus to heal. They didn’t just pray that Jesus would heal the man. They didn’t even pray! They just gave because it was theirs to give. Once we know God’s will we need to exercise our authority. The signs follow us (Mk. 16:17), we don’t need to be following the signs. Many people have desired the miraculous from God but have not received it because they didn’t know their authority in Christ, and didn’t exercise it.

In Matthew 28:18 Jesus said, “All power [authority] is given unto me in heaven and earth.” He then gave the great commission to His disciples, thereby conferring that authority upon them also.

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