The Authority of the Believer

Introduction

This appears to be a little understood subject among us. Rather than being a subject for only a few outstanding individuals, divine authority is the possession of every one of us who is a believer! It is part of what was given to us when we first believed. So why is it so misunderstood? Possibly our enemy has tried to blind our eyes and hold back our understanding of our authority in Jesus, because it confers on us great privileges and powers that can do such great damage to him!

"The god of this world has blinded the minds of unbelievers…." (2 Cor. 4:4)

Satan has been successful in blinding strategies in the case of unbelievers and possibly this is also extended to us who believe – especially in the area of our authority in Jesus.

Often we realise we have authority in the name and power of Jesus, but it is confused with other aspects of the life of faith. Somehow teaching on authority and other teachings about discipleship and being made holy are all mixed up into one big jumble. It is true that "all truth" is inter-related. Truths support each other; they are logical and balanced. But in order to grasp spiritual values and gain spiritual blessings for ourselves, we need to separate out and examine each component part of the "abundant life": prayer, faith, obedience, submission, feeding oneself on the Word of God, the life of holiness, the fullness of the Holy Spirit etc. We must apply that body of truth to our own lives and this includes our **authority**.

Some Wrong Conclusions

1. **Our authority is sometimes confused with the presence of the Holy Spirit as our Companion God.**
   We teach that the coming of the Holy Spirit into our lives in His divine fullness gives us authority. But this seems like a minor theme in the host of blessings that come into our lives with the Holy Spirit and so it is often neglected. The Holy Spirit empowers and enlightens the believer and the fullness of the Spirit enables us to exercise authority. We need to understand that the fullness is not the source of authority, but something apart from it.

2. **Authority is wrongly thought of as a spiritual gift**
   The authority we have as believers cannot be regarded as a special gift conferred on some people so that those gifted are endued with power and able to do mighty acts. Discernment of spirits and miraculous gifts are mentioned among the gifts of the Holy Spirit. However they are very different from authority.

3. **Authority and spiritual power are thought to be the same**
   Some people teach that the authority we have been given is only the ability to prevail in prayer. People who believe this have continued in prayer with enthusiasm or agony but seen no specific answer. It is still true that personal blessings have resulted. This is always the case when we seek our Father's face!

Understanding Authority

We need to define the difference between 'authority' and 'power'. In Lk. 10:19 Jesus says to the 72 disciples who had returned from their mission, "… ***I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions and over all the power of the enemy and nothing shall hurt you."*** In the Greek the words used for 'authority' and 'power' are different.

To understand the difference between 'power' and 'authority' watch a lone policeman standing in the middle of a busy crossroads directing traffic. Something is wrong with the traffic lights. Huge trucks and large numbers of cars and vans rush past him. Suddenly he raises his hand and the rush of traffic in that direction stops. He waves to the traffic in the other direction and it begins to flow in an apparently irresistible wave.

The policeman has very little power. Even if he used all his strength he couldn't hold back one car! But he has something better. He is a servant of the government and is invested with all the authority of the government. The drivers recognise this authority and so they obey him.

Authority is delegated power. Its value depends on the force behind the user! There is a story of a clash between Queen Victoria and Gladstone, her prime minister. Gladstone brought her a law to sign that had been approved by both Houses of Parliament. The Queen refused to sign! She didn't like it! Gladstone said, *"But your Majesty, you must sign this bill".* She replied, rather haughtily, *"Sir, I am the Queen of England".* Quietly Gladstone replied, *"Your Majesty, I **am** the people of England."* She signed! This story may not be true, but it illustrates the matter of authority when two opposing powers are in conflict. **A believer who is fully conscious**

of all the divine power behind him and of his authority derived from this power, can face the enemy without any fear or hesitation.

Those we confront have specific names indicating their power and authority. We read in Eph. 6:12, ***"For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers*** (Gk. *archas* = the first ones), ***against the authorities*** (Gk. *exousias*)***, against the cosmic powers*** (Gk. *kosmokratos*) ***over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in heavenly places."*** **But behind the 'authority' of the believer there is a 'power' infinitely greater than the power that backs his enemies. It is a power his enemies are compelled to recognise!**

The Source of our Authority

The source of our authority is the victory gained through the death and Resurrection of Jesus. He is the 'Captain' (Gk. a*rchegon* = prince-leader) of our salvation [see Acts 3:15 translated 'author' and Heb. 2:10 translated 'founder']. His Resurrection from the dead was accomplished by, "***The immeasurable greatness of His*** (God's) ***power*** (Gk. *dunameos*), ***according to the working*** (Gk. *energeian*) ***of His great might*** (Gk. *katous*) ***that He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named not only in this life but also in the one to come."*** (Eph. 1:19)

This great 'omnipotence' needs four Greek words to describe it: *dunameos* (power); *energeia*, *katous* (strength) and *ischuos* (missed out in the above translation).

'Kratos' means strength or power put forth to effect a change. We have echoes of the meaning in 'aristocracy' (government by the best) and 'democracy' (government by the people). It is a distinctive attribute of God. (see 1 Tim. 6:16; 1 Pet. 4:11, 5:11; Jude 25; Rev. 1:6, 5:13)

'Ischuos' is physical strength. It is used in Mk. 12:30, ***"You shall love the Lord your God with all your strength."*** God possesses this strength/might and makes it available to us – 1 Pet. 4:11.

The word translated as 'working' is *'energeis'* – energy. This is the capacity to do work. Work is one of the ways energy is demonstrated. It is often used by Paul – Eph. 3:7, 4:16; Phil. 3:1; Col. 1:29)

The Holy Spirit is highlighting the enormous expenditure of God's strength, power and energy in the work of the Cross and the Resurrection. Calvin commented, **"We may view strength as the root-power** *(dunameous)* **as the tree and efficacy** *(ischuos)* **as the fruit or the stretching out of the divine arm that terminates in action."**

Immeasurable (exceeding) is a favourite word of Paul. He uses it again in Eph. 2:7 and 3:19 as well as in 2 Cor. 3:10 and 9:14. The combination of all these words implies that the fact of **Jesus' Resurrection is the mightiest work recorded in the Bible**. It far exceeds the Creation!

The Father raised Jesus from the dead and exalted Him to His own right hand in the heavenlies. The reason for this exertion of His omnipotent power was so that, ***"All rule and authority and power and dominion and every name that is named in this age and the age to come"*** would acknowledge and submit to His authority as the Supreme Power everywhere. The 'powers of the air' had tried to oppose the Resurrection. All evil powers had been arrayed against the purposes of God. But they were overthrown and the risen Lord Jesus was enthroned 'far above' them, ruling with the authority of the Most High God.

The Conferring of Authority

Eph. 1:19: ***"….the immeasurable greatness of His power towards us who believe…."*** All this demonstration of the glory of God shown in its immense omnipotence is for all of us who believe! The Cross of the Lord Jesus shows us the measure of His obedience to the Father. It shows His atonement for sin and His crushing defeat of all the enemies of divine authority. The Cross shows us a representative 'man' overcoming for all people everywhere. Through His own reign, He prepared a throne and a heavenly ministry for all who overcome through him – that is "us who believe".

Notice how Scripture identifies God's people with Jesus Himself. Eph. 2:1, ***"You were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked."*** If you take out the parenthesis and start at Eph. 1:20, the passage reads, ***"…that He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead….. and you were dead…."*** The implication is clear. The reviving of Jesus also involved the renewing of all His people! So the very act of God that raised Jesus from the dead also raised His 'body'. Head and body are raised together. Jesus is the Head and we who believe are the body – the *'ekklesia'* – assembly of believers in Him. This is a true statement and can't be overstated or over-estimated.

Paul develops this same thought in Romans 6 where the death and Resurrection of Jesus are shown to include us. He emphasises three great truths:

- The believer's death to sin with the **crucified** Lord Jesus. When Jesus died, we died.
- The result of this is to annul the power of sin over us through giving us the indwelling life of the resurrected Lord Jesus. We rose with Him.
- Jesus **ascended** to the heavenlies where He reigns now. We too ascended to the place of authority in the heavenlies – Eph. 2:6. In this ascension and enthronement there is the anticipation of that future union in the government of the nations we will share with the Lord Jesus when He reigns. Rev. 2:26, ***"The one who conquers and who keeps My works to the end, to him I will give authority over the nations and he will rule them with a rod of iron, as when earthen pots are broken in pieces, even as I, Myself, have received authority from My Father."***

The Location of Authority

Jesus ascended to the heavenlies – to the right hand of God (Eph. 2:6) and we, as His body, ascend with Him to the same high position. This honour is not for a few, but is the position of all those who share in the Resurrection of the Lord Jesus – 'us who believe'.

When Jesus gathered His disciples on that Galilean mountain (Mt. 28:16) during the forty days after His Resurrection, He said to them, ***"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me."*** The formal assumption of that authority happened when He sat down ***"at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven"*** (Heb. 8:1). The right hand of the throne of God is indeed **the centre of power** for the whole of creation – spiritual and physical – and the exercise of the power of the throne is committed to our ascended Lord Jesus! He is still there in full possession of all His rights, waiting the Father's time when all His enemies will be made a footstool at His feet.

The elevation of His people with Him to the 'heavenly places' can have no meaning other than that we are made sharers – for the present potential sharers – of all the authority that is His. We are made to sit with Him – that is to share His throne! To share a throne certainly means to share the authority that it represents. In the plan and purposes of God we have been elevated for this purpose. He wants us to exercise authority, to the full extent of spiritual understanding, over the 'powers of the air' and over the conditions those powers of darkness have brought on the earth and are still creating through their ceaseless manipulations of the minds and circumstances of the people of the earth.

The Current Rebel Holders of this Authority

The kingdoms/governments of this world are under the control and leadership of demonic principalities. According to John's Gospel the great head of these is 'The Prince of this World'. This is acknowledged three times by Jesus (Jn. 12:31; 14:30 and 16:11)

Satan asserted his claim to be the ruler of all the kingdoms of the world in the presence of Jesus and Jesus didn't deny his claim – Lk. 4:6. Although Satan is a rebel against God's authority and is under judgement of dispossession (Jn. 12:13), he is still at work. The masses of the people in the world are also rebels. Satan maintains over them a rule that is unquestioned because it is unsuspected. Their eyes are blinded to his dominance over them (2 Cor. 4:4)

It appears from Scripture that the whole rebellious system is divided into two sections:

- The supernatural realm, 'The host of heaven, in heaven' (Is. 24:21)
  The unseen powers of the air
- The natural realm, 'The kings of the earth, on the earth'
  The rulers of people and their subjects

Both will be punished 'in that day'. ***"For behold the Lord is coming out from His place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity …."*** (Is. 24:21; 26:21). So God will judge the people and He will judge the powers. ***"In that day the Lord with His hard and great and strong sword will punish…the fleeing serpent*** (Antichrist ?) ***and the twisting serpent*** (the False Prophet ?) ***and He will slay the dragon that is in the sea*** (Satan)***"*** (Is. 27:1).

In Eph. 6:12, the demonic authorities are carefully divided. First there are 'principalities' who appear to be mighty rulers. These appear to be great fallen angels who share with Satan in his rebellion and in his power. The 'Prince of Persia' and the 'Prince of Greece' mentioned by Daniel (Dan. 10:13, 20) probably belong in this category. We wrestle against them and they strongly resist any challenge to their terrible hold on the kingdoms of people. The 'powers' (Gk. *exousia* – the usual word for delegated authority) seem to be inferior in position to the 'princes' as ministers associated in government.

Next come, ***"The world rulers of the darkness of this age"***. This name suggests a ministry of deception that keeps the minds of the people in darkness. This is especially true of those who are leaders in thought – the media, avant garde thinkers, leaders of fashion etc. At their overthrow ***"The covering that is cast over all peoples, the veil that is spread over all nations"*** (Is. 25:7) will be removed. These are demonic forces that blind our eyes to the truth and keep us in ignorance of the love and grace of the purposes of God.

Finally there are ***"the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places"*** – an innumerable body of demons who seek to involve us in lies and deceptions and incite us to all kinds of sensual desires as well as to anger, hatred and violence. These are the spiritual beings present at séances impersonating and deceiving people.

It appears that these demonic powers are particularly present at religious gatherings promoting 'religious feelings'. Seekers after truth who have been urged to the entire abandonment of themselves in the area of their wills and to the opening up of themselves without reserve are often in deep peril. Such yielding provides an entrance to demons who then gain control of the will.

The 'kings of the earth' (Is. 24:21) are human rulers – presidents, prime ministers, kings etc. As an individual, an earthly ruler may be a follower of the Lord Jesus, but by virtue of his office he is a member of the great world system that has not yet come under the rule of the King of Kings. By birth all people are also members of this system and so need to be, ***"delivered from the dominion of darkness and transferred to the Kingdom of His beloved Son."*** (Col. 1:13)

The seats of authority of these rebellious rulers are in 'the heavenlies'. From there they have dominated the human race since its fall. There they will remain until God's 'eternal purpose' (Eph. 3:11; 1:9, 10) is complete.

God's eternal purpose

The 'God of the whole earth' (Is. 54:5) does not purpose to tolerate this rebellion against His righteousness for ever! "***By Myself I have sworn; from my mouth has gone out in righteousness a word that shall not return. To me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear allegiance."*** (Is. 42:23) Before this can be accomplished the instigators of this rebellion must be cast down. God's purpose is clear. 'The Prince of the power of the air' (Eph. 2:2) and his followers – all the fallen angels – are allowed to retain their powers only while their successors are being prepared. God has redeemed a people for Himself. He is purifying them and has introduced them potentially into the heavenlies. When they have proved themselves, they will be ready to take the 'seats' (the authority) of 'the powers of the air'. They will supersede those who have demonstrated their unfitness and unworthiness by their rebellion.

This purpose, present and future, is clearly stated in Eph. 3:9-11, ***"… and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages by God who created all things, so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might be known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. This was according to the eternal purpose that He has realised in Christ Jesus our Lord".***

So the 'eternal purpose' and the manifold wisdom of God are being revealed **now** through **the church** to the 'powers of the air'. The church is God's instrument to declare to these rebellious, usurping powers that they have been cast out. Through all the past ages, the plan of God has been to prepare a people – chosen, called and faithful. He wants to place them in the heavenly seats to rule through the ages to come. Part of the plan is the wonderful veiling of the Lord Jesus in our human nature at the incarnation so that through Him, God could, ***"Grant to us His precious and very great promises that through them you*** (we) ***may become partakers of the divine nature"*** (2 Pet. 1:4).

Daniel revealed this placing of the believers in a position of authority in the first of his great visions. Dan. 7:22, ***"……the Ancient of Days came and judgement was given to the saints of the Most High and the time came when the saints possessed the Kingdom".*** And again in Dan. 7:27, ***"And the Kingdom and the dominion and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High. Their Kingdom shall be an everlasting Kingdom and all dominions shall serve and obey them."***

Clearly, the Lord Jesus holds total executive authority, but the overcoming people of God are raised to sit in the heavenlies and exercise authority.

The Extent of this Authority

The extent of the authority given to Jesus is explained in Ephesians chapter one. The powers and things placed in the control of the Lord Jesus were given when He was exalted to the right hand of the Father.

As we look at the completeness of His authority, we must remember that He is there at the right hand of God as the representative of all redeemed humanity (Heb. 2:5-9). In Eph. 1:18 we read, ***"May the eyes of your hearts be enlightened"*** by the Holy Spirit. This is so that we may believe without any doubt that the wisdom and the will of our Father God is that we should become sharers in this same authority. The Lord Jesus intends us to exercise it day by day in growing understanding.

Notice what is said about the Lord Jesus:

- He has been ***"made to sit"*** or ***"seated at God's right hand in heavenly places"*** (Eph. 1:20)
  In the Middle East rulers sit in judgement. 'All authority' has been given to Him for the working out of the redemption purchased for mankind on the Cross. Ps. 110:1, ***"The Lord says to my Lord sit at MY right hand until I make your enemies your footstool."***

  This verse is much referred to in the New Testament (Acts 2:34 ff; 7:55; Rom. 8:34; Col. 3:1; Heb. 1:3, 13; 8:1; 10:13; 12:2)

- He is seated, ***"Far above all principality and power and might and dominion".*** The great princes of darkness and the powers we thought about earlier are subject to the Lord Jesus, so also are the lesser ones. He is far above all 'might' (Gk. *Dunameos* – usually denoting in the NT spiritual power). 'Might' probably refers to the working of satanic energy. In the 21st century this will be increasingly evident as his time is getting shorter (Rev. 12:12). This energy will be directed against the minds and bodies of believers. The murder and demoralising of believers worldwide is going to increase as fresh powers from the spiritual world increasingly attack us. As the Gospel begins to penetrate into unreached peoples in the Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist and secularised worlds, the 'powers of the air' have to fall back, but they don't like it! Demon possession on a national scale as well as a personal scale will always retire before aggressive evangelism.

  But satanic energy is also ceaselessly directed against the church. The authority of the Word of God is being questioned. The Holy Spirit is being dishonoured as He is ignored and His authority is disregarded. Many in 'Christian' lands are reverting to heathenism. Satan's powers are pressing in on every side with great intensity.

- **The Lord Jesus sits far above all 'dominion'** (Gk. *kuriotes* = lordship)
  This word is related to 'rule, authority and power' that inevitably precede it (Eph. 1:21). In Col. 1:16 the list is: ***"thrones, dominions, rulers, authorities"***. Clearly these are spiritual powers. The word *'kuriotes'* is also used in 2 Pet. 2:10 and in Jude 8. It probably denotes human authority – either civil power (government), church leaders or authority in general – i.e. an anti-law attitude, Jesus is enthroned far above all these powers. Satan is no match for Him. Satan's hosts have no hope of winning.

- ***"In this age – above every name that is named."***
  Moses and all the prophets are inferior to the Lord Jesus just as a servant is less than his master. It is amazing how books like **The Da Vinci Code** make such an effort to show that Jesus was an ordinary fallible man like the rest of us. Others give Him more respect and place Him among other great men – Einstein, Confucius, Buddha etc. This is not how the Holy Spirit reveals Jesus. He reveals Him in all His majestic glory – ***"Far above all"***. Note the demonic attempt to deceive us into believing we can exalt ourselves: ***"You will be like God"*** (Gen. 3:5). In the end, all who govern must learn the lesson that God taught Nebuchadnezzar – that heaven rules! (Dan. 4:26)

- ***"But also in the age to come"***
  In the future, beyond our time, there will be no other name that ranks close to Our Lord Jesus. In that age the now dominant spirit forces will be in 'the lake of fire' (Rev. 20:10). Their successors, the glorified believers, will recognise and glory in the pre-eminence of our exalted King Jesus. United with Him as head and body, they will demonstrate His fullness. He fills 'all in all', but has chosen to do this through His Body and that includes us! This implies that in the age to come we will have an active ministry for God throughout the limitless extent of His power.

- ***"And has put all things under His feet"*** (v. 22)
  Of course the feet are the lowest members of the body. In the body of the Lord Jesus the very soles of His feet – we often feel that is our position – are far above all the mighty demonic forces we have been thinking about! We need to wake up to realise the great privilege we have been given – exalted to rule over all the 'spiritual powers of the air'. We so often fail in our ministry of authority and end up grovelling in fear before these 'powers'.

- ***Finally, the Lord Jesus is head over all things to the church*** (v. 22)
  This is a great truth that needs unpacking.

  - Many people think of the church as the vast organised system of religion that emerged in the 3rd and 4th centuries. This system became the state religion of the Roman Empire and today is represented by the Roman Catholic Church, the Eastern Orthodox Church and the various mainline protestant denominations. This huge conglomeration is not the church; it is Christendom.

  - The church consists of people who have put their personal faith in the Lord Jesus, have been baptised by the Holy Spirit into the Body of Christ and whom He now indwells. Its members are from different races, classes, time and space. Perhaps more of the members are now in heaven than on earth! This church is universal, mystical and invincible. Jesus is the Head of the church. This is what gives us dignity and destiny!

  - Jesus is Head over all things for the sake of the church so that His body may be head over all things through Him. This is an amazing truth. We need much time to think this through if our hearts and minds are to grasp all the implications!

The Father's Work in Establishing our Authority

In Colossians a different view is presented in the whole matter of the authority of the believer. It is presented from the viewpoint of the work of our Father God and how the efficacy of His work depended on the submission of Jesus to the Father.

Though he was co-equal with the Father, Jesus accepted a subordinate place and took on the task of, ***"Reconciling to Himself all things, making peace by the blood of His Cross"*** (Col. 1:20). Jesus died and was raised to life by, ***"The powerful working of the Father"*** (Col. 2:12):

- The Father raised us up with Jesus (v. 12)
- The Father had forgiven us all our sins (v. 13)
- The Father has cancelled our record of debt (v. 14)
- The Father has disarmed (Gk. *apekdusis* = completely stripped) the mighty principalities and powers that totally opposed the Resurrection of Jesus and also our Resurrection with Him (v. 15).

So what does the Father do in 'stripping' the 'powers of the air'? Clearly He removes the authority that had been theirs. Death is the penalty of sin. When Jesus, bearing the burden of the guilt of the world, went down to death, the powers tried to exercise their ancient prerogative and hold Him under their power. But in the Father's great wisdom, as the Righteous One yielded to death, He discharged the long established bond of the law. Exultantly the Father nailed the cancelled bond to the Cross of His Son. The 'powers' were stripped of their authority. He handed this authority to His Son.

So Colossians emphasises the Father's mighty power in blocking and overthrowing all the hostile powers and their subjugation to His Son. Because of this we are 'complete' in Him (Col. 2:10; 4:2)

Why has the church failed?

Jesus is Head of the church and Lord over all. His position and His power are supreme. So why are we, His people, making so little progress? I believe the answer is because the Head is wholly dependent on His body for carrying out His plan and orders. All the different members of the body must be under the control of the 'brain' if their co-ordinated function is to be accomplished. The implication of this is that Jesus who is, ***"Head over all things to the church that is His body…."*** (Eph. 1:22) is being hindered in His mighty plans and purposes because His Body (us) has failed to appreciate the deep meaning of His exaltation. We have failed to respond to the gracious impulses He constantly sends us to enervate and energise us. These come to us via:

- **The Word of God – the pattern that frames the service of the church**
  One of the amazing facts about the Body of Our Lord Jesus is that each of us retains a personal will. The

Holy Spirit indwells us in order to bring our individual wills into unity with the will and purpose of the Head. This isn't done by outward influence alone. Outward influence inaugurates obedience to the Head. But it is only the renewed mind, fully instructed by the Word of God that can fully carry out the instructions of the Head. The average member of the Body is in a position of semi-starvation from lack of feeding on the Word of God and so is unable to obey instructions because of too little energy. ***"The spirit is willing, the body is weak".*** (Mt. 26:41)

The importance of this can be seen if we compare Eph. 5:18 ff with Col. 3:16 ff. In Ephesians ***"…. be filled with the Holy Spirit addressing one another with psalms and hymns … singing and making melody … giving thanks always and for everything … submitting to one another …".*** This implies the stirring of the inward emotions of the heart resulting in joy and the submission of believers to one another.

But in the second passage in Colossians exactly the same results are pointed out to be the result of the rich indwelling of the Word of God. The Word of Christ is the setting forth of His will in a form that can be understood by the renewed mind. However the renewed mind, even when it understands the will and purpose of the Lord Jesus, lacks the power to do it.

- **The Holy Spirit in all His fullness is given to us** as our Companion to empower us to carry into effect the will of the Head. Both of these are necessary. Unless the Word richly dwells in us to instruct our minds, the Holy Spirit, although He is present in all His fullness, has nothing to work on. The Holy Spirit can't turn the instructions from the Head into specific, appropriate action. They are often like a small toddler trying to carry out the instructions of his parent. The will is present but the capability is absent.

The Head is thus hindered because the Body has not grown up into the stature of a perfect man (Eph. 4:13). The Head is patiently working on our immaturity. Brothers and sisters, we are to blame! We are to blame not only for our weakness, but also for our 'drooping hands and weak knees' (Heb. 12:12). May God help us to realise this and to fulfil our calling through the Word of God and the Holy Spirit both for others and to advance the coming of the Kingdom.

The Qualifications for Authority

The authority we are speaking of is the possession of **every** believer. It is not a special gift. It is the inherent right of every follower of Jesus. When Jesus died, we died. When Jesus rose, we rose in newness of life. When Jesus ascended to the right hand of the Father we ascended too! We don't rise into the heavenlies by any act of faith or devotion on our part. Our part is simply to recognise that we sit with Him in ***'the heavenly places'*** and to take our part in humble acceptance giving all the glory and honour to God.

There appear to be three conditions for a receptive heart and attitude on our part:

- Belief
- Humility
- Boldness

There is also a necessary warning.

Belief

Eph. 1:19, ***"… what is the immeasurable greatness of His power towards us who believe."***

A bottle may be submerged in the water but if the cork isn't removed no water can enter it. As believers, we can be submerged in all the immense omnipotence of God and yet not receive the authority of God. We might long for the experience of using this authority. We might believe, in a general sense, that; ***"All spiritual blessings are ours in the heavenly places."*** (Eph. 1:3). Yet our minds are still 'blinded' as we have read and re-read the Word of God. The simplicity and glory of the truth of their authority has not dawned on us. We all need, ***"The eyes of our hearts enlightened"*** (Eph. 1:18).

In modern English 'belief' is the simple mental acquiescence of a particular truth. In the original Anglo Saxon it means, 'to live in accordance with' – i.e. the 'belief' is causative to action. What the mind accepts the will must obey. We do not truly believe unless our conviction is demonstrated in our lives.

So the issue is, do we really believe that God has, ***"Raised us up with Him and seated us with Him in heavenly places in Christ Jesus"***? (Eph. 2:6) If we do, our reaction will be fervent, 'Lord I accept this amazing truth! I believe you have done this for me. In humble faith I take my seat in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus at your right hand. Teach me how to exercise this authority you have entrusted to me. Train me day by day so I will grow in maturity ***"to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ"***.' (Eph. 4:13)

If we are walking in the Spirit, our normal life is in the heavenlies. For us to remain conscious of this there must be a daily acceptance of this fact. As part of our worship let us take our seat with Jesus and give thanks to God for all that this implies. During the day let us often remind ourselves that we are seated far above all the powers of darkness and that they are subject to us. As our faith learns to use the name and the authority of Jesus, we will find the spiritual forces yielding obedience in ways that will surprise us. As we continue to abide closely in Him, our prayers for the advancement of the Kingdom will become less and less asking God to do a list of things. Increasingly we will learn to exercise our spiritual authority that can fearlessly bind the spiritual forces in any part of the world.

Humility

While belief introduces us to the place of authority, only humility will ensure that we retain it! We need this warning! If we compare the amazing grace of God in raising us up with Jesus with our own unworthiness, how can we become arrogant? But we do! How slowly the likeness of Jesus increases in us! How little we know of the 'cancer of pride' if we think the danger of it is over! The forces we fight against – the principalities and powers – know us better than we know ourselves. As we attack them with the authority we have been given, if we have even a small part of pride, their counter attack will be swift and crushing. Spiritual pride is a well-tested weapon they use and it so often proves effective.

Victory **is** possible, but only by God's power. Ever since Eden, our natural tendency is to forget that God is essential! We always like to think of ourselves as self-sufficient. Jesus was the first human being ever to depend fully on God. While Jesus was on the Cross, the sneer of the enemy was, ***"He trusted in God. Let Him deliver Him"*** (Mt. 27:43). But on the Cross Jesus, who was fully trusting, could not be delivered. He had to die. The whole issue of sin and eternal judgement was at stake. The shedding of His precious blood was necessary for our atonement. When this was accomplished, God raised Him from the dead, stripped His enemies of all their authority and set Him on high over them.

With us who believe, the consuming desire to be independent is something that even great spiritual maturity doesn't fully overcome. Even after some great victory there comes the subtle whisper of the enemy, *'There, you did it!'* In agreeing, the overcomer is stripped of all strength even though he feels stronger!

Boldness

With great humility there needs to be great boldness. Boldness is a demonstration of faith. Once God has spoken, to hold back is not humility, but unbelief. In exercising our authority, we need a courage that fears nothing but God. We need a courage that binds and restrains all evil powers that are against God. With this courage there must also be a continuous, close abiding in God – a careful watch on our spirit so it is alert to every urging and every check from the Holy Spirit and a mind that is steeped in the Word of God.

Finally a caution

The 'heavenly places' are the place of every spiritual blessing (Eph. 1:3) and at the same time they are the place of the most intense spiritual conflict. If you are a believer with your eyes opened to understand your 'throne rights' and if you have begun to occupy your seat and use the spiritual authority given to you, **then** you will be marked out as a target to hit!

Previously you may have believed in the presence and working of the powers of darkness. You may even have prayed against them. But now will come a new consciousness of their malevolent presence. They will bitterly resent and resist your entry into their domain and your interference in their work. They will concentrate their hatred against you in intense and repeated attacks from which there is no break or escape. If you successfully resist assaults on your spirit, they will assault your mind or your body or your family or your circumstances.

So the place of great privilege will become the place of great danger. Yet it is God Himself, with an eternal purpose in mind, who introduces us and seats us in the 'heavenly places'. There can be no doubt that He has made full provision for our complete safety and effectiveness.

The Armour of God

The **only** place of safety is to occupy your seat in the heavenly places. It is 'far above' the enemy! If you, as a believer, stay in your seat, you can't be defeated. The enemy does all he can to draw you down in your spirit. He puts his 'wiles' – plans and strategies – to tempt you out of your seat. He knows that if you leave your seat your authority is gone! You are no longer any danger to him and you are now open to further attack.

This is where Eph. 6: 10-18 comes in to resist ***"the schemes of the devil"***. You must always have on the full armour of God. The different parts of the armour symbolise different spiritual attitudes you must maintain.

The armour itself protects the believer who wears it and ensures he is unhampered in the ministry of authority. Like all good soldiers, this defensive armour must be kept in good shape and put on correctly.

- ***"The belt of truth"*** – a clear understanding of God's Word. This keeps the rest of the armour in place.
- ***"The breastplate of righteousness"*** – active obedience to the Word you have been given
- ***"Shoes of the Gospel of peace"*** – a faithful ministry of evangelism
- ***"The shield of faith"*** – indicating complete refuge under the blood of the Cross where no power of the enemy can penetrate
- ***"The helmet of salvation"*** – protecting the mind – constant reflection on how our salvation was, is and ultimately will be accomplished is able to protect us in these days
- ***"The sword of the Spirit"*** that shows the Word of God used in attack – in contrast to "the belt" when the Word of God is used in defence
- ***"Prayer"*** – training ourselves to always be God-oriented by constantly approaching God in prayer

The emphasis of this passage is on **victory** (v. 13) ***"…that you may be able to withstand in the evil day and having done all to stand firm"***. There is no suggestion of defeat. Secure in this armour, the believer may disregard the enemy and concentrate attention on the exercise of the authority that is his.

The Practical Exercise of Authority

Assuming the believer has accepted a seat of authority in the 'heavenly places', his first lesson will be personal. He will learn the significance of the term 'Satan' – the adversary and will come to understand why one of Satan's titles is 'accuser of the brethren'. Joshua found himself before the angel of the Lord and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him. (Zech. 3:1) This will also be the experience of every spiritually energetic child of God. He will encounter a constant stream of accusations in his own heart. These accusations trouble us until we discover that the purpose of the enemy is to turn our thoughts inwards upon ourselves and create in us a consciousness of personal unworthiness. Read Zech. 3:1-5. Satan's purpose is to draw us down from the 'heavenly places' and from the place of perfect faith. We need to learn, ***"To overcome him by the blood of the Lamb"*** (Rev. 12:11). This means that we must present the blood of Jesus as our only answer to these constant accusations.

The second lesson we must learn to use in 'overcoming by the blood of the Lamb' is the sense of victory. The blood represents not only cleansing from guilt, shame and the power of sin, but it is also the witness of that overwhelming victory gained in the Cross and Resurrection. This victory seated the Lord Jesus at the right hand of the Father. Once we really grasp this, we see that we don't need to fight against the enemy! We simply need to hold over him an already accomplished victory. We share in the consequences of this victory.

I don't think I fully understand the full vision of this triumph. But as we sit in ***'heavenly places'*** and exercise our authority there will be a gradual perfecting of our heavenly warfare. In **that place** of authority we will learn the reality of the 'new song' of Ps. 149 where, concerning the powers of darkness, we will, ***"Bind their kings with chains and their nobles with fetters of iron"*** and in that coming day of the return of the Lord Jesus we will participate in the execution on them of ***"the judgement written"*** (v. 9). Note that in this final verse of Ps. 145 it says, ***"This is the honour for all His godly ones!"*** How amazingly privileged we are!

- **The limitation of authority**

It is of absolute importance that the authority given to a believer is over 'the powers of the air' – the spiritual principalities and powers and forces of wickedness. Our authority is **never** over fellow believers, **never** over other people and **never** over their wills. We are called to bind demonic spiritual forces and free people. Satan's constant aim is the subjugation of human wills to himself. God's purpose is the full liberation of the will so that our freed spirits and minds will glorify our Creator and Redeemer with joy. All attempts to control the human will obtained through occult power, drugs, hypnotism etc. are forbidden to the believer. This is ultimately to follow a demonic example.

- **Examples of the use of our authority**

  - ***Release from physical disease***
    Not all disease is caused by demonic involvement, but some is. Past involvement with the occult can cause illness now. One characteristic of such disease is that medical treatment doesn't bring healing

or healing is very slow and intermittent. Confession of sin and demonic involvement together with refusing any further oppression from the enemy if often followed by quick and permanent healing.

- ***Release from depression and oppression of the mind***
  Any believer and especially Christian workers can have a sudden attack of intense despondency. Sometimes attacks persist until the mind is in complete bondage, all joy has fled and only a feeble hold on salvation remains. There may be suggestions of suicide that come with increasing frequency and press home with terrible urgency. The believer is often unable to deliver himself. He needs help.

  The helper needs to take his place in the ***'heavenly places'*** and assert the power of the all-victorious Lord Jesus in such a situation. The oppressed believer needs to realise that evil powers have somehow obtained a hold over him. These powers are trying to force him into self-destruction. He needs to remember that Satan is a deceiver and a murderer. He needs to remember the victory of Jesus on the Cross:

  1) When Jesus died we died.
  2) When Jesus rose we rose in victory and freedom.
  3) When Jesus ascended we too ascended into ***'heavenly places'*** with Him.
  4) We are now in the place of authority with Jesus.

  The oppressed believer should be encouraged to affirm his/her faith audibly in the presence of two or three witnesses. After they have asserted these great truths and their acceptance of all that Jesus has done for them, it is good to pray with them in victorious prayer.

- ***Dealing with anger***
  "Be angry and sin not. Don't let the sun go down on your anger and give no opportunity to the devil." (Eph. 4:26)
  There is a clear connection between sinful anger and Satan – the prince of evil. Sustained anger opens the door for Satan to enter your life. There are two things we can do when we notice believers in a heated quarrel. Firstly, we who watch should listen and pray quietly taking our authority over the spirits of evil who are stirring up anger. We should command their withdrawal. Perhaps we know someone with a very quick and ungovernable temper who has a tendency to lose control and get in a rage over a comparatively trivial matter. We need to pray quietly and take the authority of the Lord Jesus over the evil spirits that are provoking that person.

  Secondly, we should strongly encourage the angry person to seek victory for himself or herself by explaining what is happening to them so they can take control themselves over demonic attacks. The first step is a 'holding operation'. The second step brings liberty.

- ***Dealing with fear***
  There are occasions when even experienced workers are suddenly overwhelmed with an almost uncontrollable fear. It is often irrational but none the less paralysing. Those close to the worker need to take the authority of the Lord Jesus over the spirits of fear and rebuke them. This should be done quietly in their hearts. There is much we can do for our colleagues in such circumstances.

  We ourselves might be overwhelmed by a demonic attack of fear and in that moment we may have no one to pray with. We must remember our position – seated with Jesus in the place of authority. This will enable us to command the spirits of fear to leave.

- ***Dealing with the demonised***
  Demons recognise at once the presence of a believer exercising the Lord's authority. They are afraid of that person! The believer can control the behaviour of someone who is demonised. But full deliverance can't take place without the full consent of the one who is demonised. Books dealing with this form of counselling give many examples of this.

- ***Dealing with those who oppose the truth***
  Sometimes in an evangelistic setting one person or a whole group of people will start up shouts, chants or loud abusive cries that disrupt the gathering and make it impossible to continue. In such a situation the best thing is to gather some believers together and say something like this, *"In the name of the Lord Jesus and by His authority we bind the strong evil power from stirring up these people and attacking God's work."* This often causes confusion among the troublemakers and they leave.

Inferences from the Above Examples

The above examples are some of the many situations where the direct working of demonic spirits can be inferred. In all these situations the authority of the Lord Jesus is available in the believer. When an obedient believer claims his throne rights in the Lord Jesus and boldly asserts his authority, the 'powers of the air' will recognise this authority and obey. Often there is an unwillingness and delay on their part and time may be needed. Once the word of authority has been spoken, it isn't necessary to repeat it. We must learn to 'stand' (Eph. 6:13) and strengthen ourselves in God as we wait. We will learn, as the disciples learned, that, ***"Even the demons are subject to us through Your Name"*** (Lk. 10:17).

Let us apply this to other problems we face in the extension of the Kingdom of God. Here are four very common hindrances:

- **The shortage of funds**
  It is hard to see any work of the devil short of funds – war, slavery, prostitution, drugs etc. But it appears that any advance by believers into the areas of darkness leads to shortage of funds. It is clear that Satan is choking the channels of Christian giving in many shrewd ways. Money in the hands of believers is 'tied up'. If this money was released the Kingdom of God would be advanced. Let us take authority over demonic forces that are 'tying up' these funds and release them.
- **Closed doors, closed areas, closed lands**
  On the surface human governmental authority is responsible for these closed areas. But behind these human authorities there stand the shadowy forms of the great demonic princes (Dan. 10). They rule the minds and wills of the people that we can see in authority. It is those demonic leaders who are blocking the entry of the truth. They will continue to block it until groups of believers rise up and agree together that this state of affairs can no longer continue! As we stand together and exercise our spiritual authority, saying in the name of the Lord, *"This shall not be!"* then these unseen but dominating forces will not be able to dominate any longer. They will be forced to yield ground and doors will open, areas will open up and we will be able to advance.
- **Various hindrances**
  False religion, bigotry, jealousy, paganism, ignorance in people's minds, fear and hatred are familiar to all of us. Disunity can begin in our ranks and the Spirit of Peace is grieved and withdraws. Behind these hindrances and many more, the presence of these evil powers can be assumed. The solution is their displacement. We alone are to blame if they continue to exert their power!
- **In personal friendship evangelism**
  Often when we share the Gospel with our friends they have the greatest difficulty in grasping the truth or yielding to it. Their minds are blinded and bound. A quiet attitude of victory over the opposing spirits has often brought swift release. Maintain a conscious quiet position of, *"In the name of the Lord Jesus I rebuke these lying, opposing spirits."* This will enable our friends to be released to see and understand the truth.

  We need to see more people released from 'the snare of the Devil' and freed from various forms of bondage. For this to happen we must stand steadfastly for their deliverance. This may take time – years, decades. But we must stand against the fierce and relentless assaults of these deadly enemies.

The Final Outcome of our use of Our Authority

The question is often asked, *"Why does God allow this constant battle?"* It is clear from Scripture that God has planned that the believer, through the out-working of the redemption Jesus obtained for us on the Cross, would regain the authority in Creation that he lost in the Fall. This is why Jesus, as man and having conquered for man, now sits as man's representative in the seat destined for all believers when our redemption is fully revealed. In the interim period, the wonderful provision exists that we are 'in Christ' (a major theme of Ephesians) and this means that we are given authority in His name.

As a result of this, God throws on us, the believers, responsibility for the condition we find ourselves in! We often say, *"This isn't right. This is unacceptable!"* We realise many conditions are the work of demonic powers. We cry to God to rebuke the enemy and to change things!

But God says to us through His Word, *"Believer, rebuke the enemy yourself! The authority to do so is yours. I have given you authority over him. I have committed the responsibility to you. I want you to learn that you can prevail in these conditions. I have prepared a high and holy task for you in the Coming Age. This is a time of testing and preparation for you. Be strong and of good courage and no one will be able to stand before you all the days of your life."*

As believers we are slowly waking up to our high place of privilege in the Lord Jesus and we are assuming the responsibilities that are involved. The 'Body of Jesus' that will 'rule all the nations' is nearing completion. The members of this 'Body' come from every people, in every age. We will ascend to the Throne of God that we now potentially share. The result will be the rebellious 'powers of the air' that have resisted God's authority for so long, being fully and finally dispossessed of their place as room is made for 'the Body'.

Scripture says, ***"The powers of darkness will be shaken"*** (Mt. 24:29; Mk. 13:25; Lk. 21:26). The tremors are already happening now. Every fully-yielded believer who crowns Jesus King increases the consternation of the panic-stricken forces of evil. Conscious of their impending overthrow, they are trying to hold back the final issue by fierce attacks on every front.

Now is not the time for us to retire. Let us meet every attack of the demonic forces with a counter attack. Faith is needed as well as courage, determination and sacrifice. We have these and much more! We have the Cross and its overwhelming victory. We need believers, both men and women, who will meet God in all that He offers us and who will take up the cause of the 'hard places'. We need those who will reply to the challenge of false religion by firmly and quietly taking the authority of the Lord Jesus over the principalities and powers in the 'heavenly places'.