

THE BELIEVER'S AUTHORITY IN CHRIST

by Rick McKinney, Teaching Notes for Sunday Night Prayer Meeting, November 29, 2009

Exousia = authority (used 102 times in NT); dynamis = power (119 times); pistis = faith (242 times); pisteuo = believe, sometimes believer (241 times); pistos = faithful, sometimes believer (67 times).

“The centurion replied, ‘Lord. I am not worthy to have you come under my roof. But only say the word and my servant will be healed. For I am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I say to one, ‘Go,’ and he goes; and to another, ‘Come,’ and he comes. I say to my slave, ‘Do this,’ and he does it.” Mt.8:8-9

“While Jesus was walking in the temple courts, the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders came to him, and they said to him ‘By what authority are you doing these things, and who gave you this authority to do them?’” Mk 11:27-28

As human beings we have been given the limited authority of our free wills which God will not violate. But enhanced authority comes from what position we hold – parents, bosses, bishops, police officers, presidents, kings, military commanders – a rightful or legitimate authority under God. Truly recognizing and acting on our “position” as being “in Christ,” can enable us to witness and proclaim God’s word with power and authority over situations, diseases, demonic forces, people, and all creation. For being in Christ means we are under his authority not ours. We sit on the throne with Him only because we also sit at his feet. It is not, “Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left.” Mk 10:37. It is rather like Mary, “Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. Be it done to me according to your word.” Lk 1:38.

KEYS TO RECOGNIZING AUTHORITY AND TO EFFECTIVELY PROCLAIMING GOD’S WORD

KNOWLEDGE: Just as being knowledgeable in a certain field may lead people to consider you an “authority,” so our authority in Christ is enhanced when we know our scripture, theology, and doctrine.

REVELATION: Just as John the Baptist and the Old Testament prophets had an authority because their words came from the “mouth of God” in public revelation we too can receive private revelation and thus can be used by God to read hearts and have personal conviction and desire.

AUTHENTICITY: When someone lives what he believes or preaches it has authority and draws attention from people for it authenticates a message without hypocrisy and becomes a possible lifestyle for them.

COMMISSION: Just as an ambassador or trustee has authority by representing a legitimate authority so also by listening to God, we can know the who, what, where, when, and how of speaking the truth in love.

POWER: Similarly to a police officer whose legitimate authority is enhanced by carrying a firearm, if we walk with anointed power from God, we can have legitimate power and authority to work miracles.

FAITH: Just as someone who is absolutely convinced of his ideas can have power to persuade, “we too believe and therefore speak.” And thus, our words can have authority and dynamic power to work.

LOVE: Just as love heals and appeals while arguments can inflame and harden positions so also our love can bring healing and draw (not just persuade) people to the gospel of the one who died for all.

Question 1: Where do I see Christ’s authority being exercised with knowledge, revelation, etc.?

Question 2: How have I experienced or am experiencing being under Christ’s authority?

Question 3: How have I exercised or am exercising my authority “in Christ?”

SOME BRIEF REFLECTIONS ON THE USE OF THE TERM 'AUTHORITY' IN SCRIPTURE

“When Jesus had finished saying these things (the Sermon on the Mount), the crowds were amazed at his teaching, because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law.” Matt. 7:28-29.

‘You have heard it said, but I say... - No quoting the Talmud or other scholars, but a claim to original authority-God’s.

“All the people were amazed and said to each other, ‘What is this teaching? With authority (‘exousia’) and power (‘dynamis’) he gives orders to evil spirits and they come out.” Luke 4:36.

“When Jesus had called the Twelve together, he gave them power (‘dynamis’) and authority (‘exousia’) to drive out demons and to cure diseases, and he sent them out to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick.” Luke 9:1-2.

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

Christ’s authority (rightful command or respected expertise) authenticated by works of power (miracles, deliverance, healing) are rightfully given to his disciples. Snakes & scorpions could be seen as deceptions from the enemy, including false beliefs about our own powerlessness, helplessness, stupidity, insecurity, self sufficiency, etc.

“I have authority to lay it (my life) down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father.” John 10:20.

The free authority and power to lay down ones life (in small or large ways) out of love is ours in Christ.

“But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins...” Mark 2:10. “If you forgive anyone his sins they are forgiven; if you do not...” John 20:23. “If you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive may forgive your sins.” Mark 11:25.

From the Catholic perspective priests in the confessional have authority in Christ to forgive sins committed against God and others, and all believers have the power to forgive sins committed against themselves. This is a decision of the will although the feelings of hurt, mistrust and fear may need the direct experience of Christ’s healing presence.

“You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above. Therefore, the one who handed me over to you is guilty of a greater sin.” John 19:11.

Ultimately, in God’s design, ‘there is no authority except which God has established.’ Rom. 13:1.

“All authority in heaven and earth has been given me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.” Matt. 28:19-20.

As believers, we have been commissioned under God as his ambassadors to witness and make disciples. 2 Cor. 5:20.

“You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.” Gal. 3:26-27.

“And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.” Eph. 2:6-7.

The extraordinary thing is that as believers we are not only servants, ambassadors, disciples and friends, but are actually sons and daughters of the eternal, creator God and seated with Christ in the heavenly realms.