



PONDER

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The rapidly approaching end of increase in the activity of the nations, more intense than at any largely to the stirring up of the ambitions and passions of men, while the spread of an almost wholly secularized education is quietly doing away with the scriptural standards which formerly exerted a restraining influence among the so-called Christian peoples. Our wealth and social culture have not made us thankful to the Giver of all good, but have centered us upon the material produced a self-sufficiency that the Creator of all. Godlessness, strongly in the Soviet Union, is though less blatant, in our own land.

II Timothy
3:1-9

the age is witnessing a tremendous powers of darkness. Unrest among the previous time in earth's history, is due

things of the world, and have quite ignores our dependence upon which we have condemned so almost equally as pronounced,

Revelation
3:14-22

These conditions are reacting strongly upon the great ministry of the Church of Christ, the giving of the gospel to the heathen world. War has closed many doors in foreign lands, and at the same time has cut off financial contributions in not a few countries which formerly took an active interest in missions. More serious still is the attitude of large sections of the church towards the state of the heathen. No longer are these concerned about the lost souls which wander in darkness; their thought is centered on raising their social status and meeting their intellectual and physical needs.

New Conception of Prayer

To meet the situation, the Church of Christ needs a new conception of prayer. The urgent call is for men and women, wholly yielded to the Lord, whose eyes have been enlightened to see the ministry in the heavenlies to which they have been called. Such believers, whether as intercessors, or as workers at home, or missionaries on the foreign

fields, may in union with the great head of the Body, exercise an authority to which the powers of the air must give place wherever challenged.

The Authority of the Believer

There are few subjects relating to the Christian life concerning which there is no little exact knowledge as that of the authority of the believer. This is not because such authority is the property only of a few elect souls. On the contrary, it is the possession of every true child of God. It is one of the “all things” received in Christ. Its reception dates from the soul’s contact with Calvary.

Probably because of the extreme importance of a correct understanding of its privileges and responsibilities, and because of the power which they confer on a militant believer, the enemy has specially sought to hold back this knowledge from God’s people. He has been successful through the employment of the “blinding” tactics which he has found effective in the cast of the “lost” and of those who “believe not” (II Corinthians 4:3-4). For it is strangely true that, although its principles are set forth in a definite way in this epistle to the Ephesians, there is very little grasp of them by the majority of even spiritual believers.

That there is such authority is recognized, but it is confounded with other aspects of the life of faith, and thereby loses its distinctive value and power. Every doctrine of scripture, while correlated closely with others of the same class, has features peculiar to itself. Only as these are clearly understood, and held in their right relationship, can there be the fullest benefit from their reception. The constitution and laws of the spiritual world are perfectly orderly and logical, and must be adhered to and carefully obeyed if the desired and promised results are to be gained.

In making this statement it is not intended to suggest that a logical and intelligent mind can of itself grasp spiritual values, or gain possession of spiritual blessings. Were that possible, the deepest phases of the Christian life would be the possession of the most intellectual. Whereas, it is very definitely asserted by the Spirit of God that, in the apprehension of divine truth, “the wisdom of the wise” is destroyed, and “the understanding of the prudent” brought to naught. Thank God, there is an inner spiritual understanding, conferred through the enlightenment of that same Spirit, which enables “the foolish things of the world to confound the wise” – this principle being established by God “that no flesh should glory in his presence.”

Wrong Conceptions

All important distinctions... on two occasions in his writings Apostle Paul used a phrase which is of peculiarly important application to the subject which is before us. It is found in his letters to the Romans (3:18) and the Philippians (1:10), and the marginal rendering is, “distinguish the things that differ.”

The authority of the believer is by some confounded with the fullness of the Spirit. It is taught that the coming of the gracious Spirit of God into the soul in His divine fullness give authority. But the believer's authority exists before he seeks or realized in any special way the Spirit's presence. It is certainly true that the fullness of the Spirit empowers and enlightens the believer. By this alone he is enabled to exercise authority. But the fullness is not the source of the authority, but something apart from it.

Nor can authority be regarded as some special gift conferred, whereby the recipient is endued with power, by virtue of which he performs mighty acts such as the casting out of evil spirits. Discernment of spirits and miraculous powers are mentioned among the charismata of the Holy Spirit, but they differ from authority.

By others, the authority of the believer is looked upon as nothing more than prevailing prayer. We have heard men on their knees, when under a special urge, giving thanks to God for the gift of prayer conferred at the time. But, later, there has been no result seen from the agony or enthusiasm of intercession through which they have passed. Personal blessing has resulted from the intense seeking of God's face, but a specific answer to their supplications has not been manifest.

What Authority Is

Let us, first of all, define the difference between "authority" and "power." In the New Testament the translators have not been uniform in the rendering of many words, and these two words have suffered among others. One notable instance is in Luke 10:19 where "power" is twice used although there is a different Greek word in each instance. To have translated the first of these by English word "authority" would have given a clearer idea of the meaning of the passage. Perhaps our good old English tongue is at times to blame in not providing sufficient synonyms to meet the demands of the original. But a little more uniformity in rendering the same word from the original by the same English equivalent (a thing usually, though not always, possible) would have given greater clearness of understanding although in places it might not have been so euphonious.

One stands at the crossing of two great thoroughfares. Crowds of people are surging by; multitudes of high-powered vehicles rush along. Suddenly, a man in uniform raises a hand. Instantly, the tide of traffic ceases. He beckons to the waiting hosts on the cross street, and they flow across in an irresistible wave. What is the explanation? The traffic officer has very little "power." His most strenuous efforts could not avail to hold back one of those swiftly passing cars. But he has something far better. He is invested with the "authority" of the corporation whose servant he is. The moving crowds recognize this authority and obey it.

Authority, then, is delegated power. Its value depends upon the force behind the user. There is a story told of the Right Honorable W.E. Gladstone, when he served as Prime Minister of Great Britain. On one occasion, he brought in to Queen Victoria, an important measure for her signature, in order that it might become law. The queen

objected to it, and after some discussion, refused to sign. The Minister of the Crown was unusually urgent: “Your Majesty,” he said, respectfully but firmly, “you must sign this bill.” She turned on him haughtily: “Sir, I am the Queen of England.” Unmoved, the statesman answered quietly: “Your Majesty, I am the people of England.” After a little thought, she accepted the situation, and affixed her signature to the document.

This story may be apocryphal, but it illustrates the question of authority when two opposing powers are in conflict. The believer, who is fully conscious of divine Power behind him, and of his own authority thereby, can face the enemy without fear or hesitation. Those who confront him bear the specific names of power and authority: “we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities (*archas*, the first or preeminent ones), against powers (*exousias*, the authorities).” But, behind the “authority” possessed by the believer, there is a “Power” infinitely greater than that which backs his enemies, and which they are compelled to recognize.

The Source of Authority

Remember we made the statement that the soul’s authority dates from its contact with Calvary. Let us now point out the meaning and the depth of this truth. When the Lord Jesus, the Captain (Archegon, Prince-Leader) of our salvation, was raised from the dead, the act of resurrection was accomplished through “the exceeding greatness of His (God’s) power (*dunameos*), to usward who believe, according to that working (*energeian*) of the strength (*kratous*) of His might (*ischuos*).” In this working there was such a putting forth of the divine omnipotence that the Holy Spirit, through the apostle, requires four words of special significance to bring out the thought. We shall not enter into the expressive meaning and grouping of these words further than to say that their combination signifies that behind the fact of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus there lay the mightiest working recorded in the Word of God.

Having been thus raised from among the dead, Christ Jesus was exalted by God to His own right hand in the heavenlies. Then was seen the reason of such mighty working. The resurrection had been opposed by the tremendous “powers of the air”; - “all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world (*aioni*, age) but also in that which is to come.” The evil forces of the “age to come” had been arrayed against the purpose of God. They had, however, been baffled and overthrown, and the risen Lord had been enthroned “far above” them, ruling with the authority of the Most High.

The Conferring of Authority

In calling attention to the “exceeding greatness of his (God’s) power,” we passed over without comment four words. These are: “to usward who believe.” All the demonstration of the glory of God, shown in the manifestation of His omnipotence, pointed manward. The cross of Christ, with what it revealed of obedience to God, of atonement for sin, of crushing defeat of the foes of divine authority, shows us a

representative Man overcoming for mankind and preparing, through His own incumbency, a throne and a heavenly ministry for those who should overcome through Him.

Observe in this connection the identification of Christ's people with Himself, in this crisis of the resurrection. In the first verse of chapter two, the words read literally: "And you, being dead in trespasses and sins," or, perhaps, to bring out better the thought: "And you, when ye were dead in trespasses and sins." It will be noticed that we have left out the verb "hath He quickened" which appears in our Bibles. This verb is not in the original; the sentence is incomplete, "being left unfinished." We do not accept this as the explanation of the omission, for we believe that the Holy Spirit so arranged the structure of the whole passage that the fact might be emphasized that Christ and His people were raised together.

Where, then, do we find the verb that controls this passage? It will be seen in verse 20 of chapter 1: "According to that working of the strength of His might when He raised HIM from the dead... (then, putting a parenthesis around the words to the end of the chapter)... and YOU when ye were dead." The same verb which expresses the reviving of Christ expresses also the reviving of His people. That is to say the very act of God which raised the Lord from among the dead, raised also His body. Head and body are naturally raised together: Christ, the Head; His body, the Church (ho, ekklesia, the assembly of believers in Him). This is a most important statement, and one of which the definite significance cannot be overestimated.

The same thought, in another form, is developed by the apostle in Romans 6, where the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus are shown to also include His people. The passage in Romans sets forth:

1. the death to sin of the believer with the crucified Christ, and
2. the consequent annulling of the power of sin over him through the impartation of the life of the resurrected Christ. The believer is thus made a full partaker of Christ's righteousness. But Ephesians lifts
3. the believer with the ascended Christ to the heavenlies where he is made a partaker of Christ's throne.

In this enthronement, there is an anticipation of that future union in the government of the nations which he shall share with his Lord, ruling them with a rod of iron braking them in pieces like potter's vessel (Revelation 2:26-27).

The Location of Authority

That there may be no misunderstanding of the Holy Spirit's meaning in this presentation of the truth of the elevation of the Lord's people with their Head, He gives it a second time in chapter 2:4-6. They are made to sit with Christ "in the heavenlies." Christ's session is at the right hand of God. His people, therefore, occupy "with him" the same

august position. This honor is not to a chosen few, but is the portion of all those who share the resurrection of the Son of God. It is the birthright of every true believer, of every born-again child of God.

When the Master foregathered with the eleven on the Galilean mountain; at some time during the forty days of His manifestation after His passion, He said to them: "All authority is given unto me in heaven and in earth." His formal assumption of that authority took place when He sat down "on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens" (Hebrews 8:1). The right hand of the throne of God is the center of power of the whole universe, and the exercising of the power of the throne was committed unto the ascended Lord. He is still there in full possession of His rights, awaiting the Father's time when His enemies shall be made the footstool of His feet.

The elevation of His people with Him to the heavenlies has no other meaning than that they are made sharers potentially for the present, of the authority which is His. They are made to sit with Him; that is, they share His throne. To share a throne means without question to partake of the authority which it represents. Indeed, they have been thus elevated, in the plan of God, for this very purpose, that they may even now exercise, to the extent of their spiritual apprehension, authority over the powers of the air, and over the conditions which those powers have brought about on the earth and are still creating through their ceaseless manipulations of the minds and circumstances of mankind.