

**THE AUTHORITY  
OF THE BELIEVER**

**PRINCIPLES SET FORTH IN THE  
EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS**

**BY**

**J. A. MACMILLAN**

## CONTENTS

Chapter 1: Authority Defined	3
Chapter 2: The Source of Authority	5
Chapter 3: The Rebel Holders of This Authority	7
Chapter 4: The Divine Purpose of the Ages	9
Chapter 5: The Extent of This Authority	10
Chapter 6: The Failure of the Church	13
Chapter 7: The Qualifications for Authority	14
Chapter 8: Fear	17
Chapter 9: The Practical Exercise	19
Chapter 10: The Final Outcome of Authority	24

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **AUTHORITY DEFINED**

There are few subjects relating to the Christian life concerning which there is so 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 case of the “lost” and of those who “believe not” (2 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 recognised, 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**

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 gives authority. But the believer’s authority exists before he seeks or realises 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 the 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 recognise 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 late Right Honourable W. E. Gladstone, 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 pre-eminent 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 recognise.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE SOURCE OF AUTHORITY

In the beginning of this article, 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 us-ward 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 (*aion*, 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 us-ward 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," says one expositor, "in the rapidity of dictation." 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 emphasised 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 can not 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 and breaking them in pieces like a 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 honour 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 fore-gathered 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 centre 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.

## CHAPTER 3

### THE REBEL HOLDERS OF THIS AUTHORITY

It is necessary here to state, what is commonly understood by those who study carefully the Word, that the kingdoms of this world are under the control and leadership of Satanic principalities. The great head of these is, in the Gospel of John, three times acknowledged as “Prince of this World” by our Lord Himself. His asserted claim to the suzerainty of the world kingdoms, made in the presence of the Lord Jesus (Luke 4:6), was not denied by Christ. Although a rebel against the Most High, and now under judgment of dispossession (John 12:31), he is still at large, and as the masses of mankind are also rebels, he maintains over them an unquestioned, because unsuspected rule, their eyes being blinded to his dominance (2 Corinthians 4:4).

The whole rebellious system is divided into heavenly and earthly sections (Isaiah 24:21). These are “the host of the high ones on high” (the unseen powers of the air) and “the kings of the earth upon the earth” (the rulers of mankind and their subjects). Both, the prophet tells us, will be judged in that day when “Jehovah cometh forth out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity” (Isaiah 26:21) and “with his hard and great and strong sword will punish leviathan the swift serpent (the antichrist), and leviathan the crooked serpent (the false prophet); and he will slay the monster that is in the sea (the dragon)” (Isaiah 27:1) Before these acts of judgment occur, the Lord’s people will be caught up in the Rapture. As Isaiah’s eyes were hidden to the mystery of the Church, he does not mention it, but he does speak of the hiding of the Jewish remnant from the wrath of the dragon: “Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee; hide thyself for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast” (Isaiah 26:20).

The “host of the high ones on high” is carefully divided in our epistle (Ephesians 6:12). There are first the “principalities and powers.” The first-named are mighty princes, whose principalities include large areas of the earth, with authority over the nations included in them. The “powers” are difficult to distinguish from them, although attempts have been made to state the difference; they are inferior in position, probably as ministers associated in government.

Following come “the world-rulers of the darkness of this age.” This name would suggest a ministry of deception, the keeping in darkness of the minds of men, and especially of the leaders of thought. At their overthrow there will be removed “the face of the covering that covereth all peoples, and the veil that is spread over all nations,” blinding their eyes, and keeping them in ignorance of the love and purposes of the Most High.

Finally, there are “the hosts of wicked spirits in the heavenlies” - innumerable body of demons, to whose close connection with mankind is due the grosser sins and deceptions, the stirring up of the animal passions, and the incitement to all manner of sensual and sensuous desires. These are the beings that are present in the spiritist seance, impersonating and deceiving people of strong intelligence, like the well-known leaders connected with the cult today.

These beings are also at hand in religious gatherings, and are a source of peculiar danger, especially when the emotions are deeply stirred. Many earnest souls, who have been urged to entire surrender, open their beings with the utmost abandon to whatever spiritual force approaches them, unaware of the peril of so doing. Such yielding often provides an opening for the entrance of demons, who under some pretext gain control of the will. To dislodge them, and to once more free the victim, is usually a very difficult task.

The “kings of the earth upon the earth” comprise human world-rulers and their subjects, all unregenerate men. An earthly ruler individually may be a Christian, but he is, by virtue of his office, a member of the great world-system which has not yet come under the dominion of the King of kings. All natural men are members by birth also of this system, and so must be “delivered out of the power (*exousias*, authority) of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of his dear Son” (Colossians 1:13).

The seats of authority of these rebellious spiritual rulers are also in the heavenlies. From there they have dominated the human race since its fall. There they will remain until the divine “purpose of the ages” is complete.



## CHAPTER 4

### THE DIVINE PURPOSE OF THE AGES

The “God of the whole earth” does not purpose to tolerate forever this rebellion against His righteousness. “By myself have I sworn, the word is gone forth from my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, that unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear.” Ere this can be accomplished, the instigators to human rebellion must be cast down. In this regard the divine method is clear. “The powers of the air” are allowed to retain their seats only while their successors are being prepared. God, having redeemed a people and purified them, has introduced them potentially into the heavenlies. When they have approved themselves, they will in actuality take the seats of the “powers of the air,” thereby superseding those who have manifested their unfitness and unworthiness.

This purpose, present and future, is very definitely stated in chapter 3:9-11. Here it is revealed as the divine will that “now (*nun*, the present time) unto the principalities and powers in the heavenly places might be made known through the church the manifold wisdom of God.” The Church is to be God’s instrument in declaring to these rebellious, and now usurping powers, the divine purpose, and in administering their principalities, after they have been unseated and cast down.

This is further declared to be “according to the eternal purpose (*prosethin toga aionon*, the purpose of the ages) which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.” That is to say, God, through all the past ages, has had in view this wonderful plan of preparing in Christ Jesus a people, chosen and called and faithful, whom He might place in these heavenly seats to rule through the ages yet to come. It is spoken of, in the verses just preceding, as “the mystery, which for ages hath been hid in God,” one phase of this mystery being the wonderful veiling of the deity of the Son of God in our human nature, that we through Him might “become partakers of a divine nature” (2 Peter 1:4).

This exaltation of the saints and its object were revealed to Daniel in the midst of his own great world-visions. In verse 22 of chapter 7, after the coming of the Ancient of days, “judgment was given to the saints of the most High,” and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom.” A little later (verse 27) we read that “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.” The meaning is clear. The saints of the Most High are the overcoming Church, raised to sit in the heavenlies. Below them, and as objects of their care, are the people of Israel, called here “the people of the saints of the most High.” Israel will administer the earthly kingdom, and will be head of the nations. But, over all, will rule the exalted Church, as the executive of God.

## CHAPTER 5

### THE EXTENT OF THIS AUTHORITY

We shall turn again to chapter 1, and consider in detail the powers and things that have been made subject to our Lord, in His exaltation to the Father's right hand. As we meditate on the completeness of His authority, let us remember that He is there as the Representative (Hebrews 2:5-9) of redeemed humanity. And "may the eyes of our understanding be enlightened" by the Holy Spirit so that we may believe, without any doubt or shrinking, that the wisdom and will of the Father have made us sharers of this same authority, and that He verily intends that we should exercise it day by day in growing comprehension and apprehension.

We notice, first of all, that the Risen Christ has been ...

#### "MADE TO SIT"

The act of sitting indicates that, for the time being, certain aspects of His work are in abeyance. Later, the Lord will again "rise up to the prey." But, just now, with "all authority" delivered unto Him, He is awaiting the Father's time, and meanwhile exercising the powers placed in His hands for the working out of the redemption purchased for mankind on Calvary. His session is ...

#### "FAR ABOVE"

"... all principality, and power, and might, and dominion." The great princes and authorities, of whom we have previously spoken, are subject to Him. So are the lesser ones: He is far above all "might" (*dunameos*, a word used usually in the New Testament of spiritual power). This refers to that working of Satanic energy which is becoming increasingly manifest, directed as it is against the bodies and minds of the children of God. The inroads that are being made into Christian communities are appalling, but few in the Church are as yet awake to the fact that fresh powers from the unseen world are flooding in upon us. Nor is the cause of this hard to trace. In the parts of the heathen world, where the Word of God energised by the Spirit of God has penetrated, the powers of the air have fallen back. Demon possession ever retires before an aggressive evangelism, and its manifestations become less frequent. But, in our so-called Christian lands, the authority of the Word is now called in question by the great leaders of the churches, and there are few theological institutions where it is recognised as the very Word of God. In like manner, the Spirit of God is dishonoured firstly, by this very denial of the Word which He has inspired, and secondly, by the disregard paid to His Person and authority. Thus, there is a reversion to heathen conditions spiritually, and as the great Agents for the overthrow of demoniacal powers (the Word of God and the Spirit of God) are discredited, these powers are pressing in again upon our country and people. One single evidence of this fact is the tremendous advance that spiritism is making among all classes; while, as another proof, the very doctrines of the Church, depleted, as they are becoming, of their vital spiritual force, are showing undoubted marks of those "teachings of demons" of which the great Apostle bade his hearers beware.

Christ sits also far above all “dominion” (*kuriotetos*, lordship). This term is closely allied with the preceding, much as “principalities and powers” are grouped together, the second term in each case signifying similar action on a somewhat lower plane. In Colossians 1:16, we find “dominion” connected with “thrones,” which throws light upon the relative term “might.” In this passage and in that quoted from Colossians, both terms refer directly to spiritual powers, whereas in 2 Peter 2:10 and Jude 8, the only two other occasions of the use of the word in the New Testament, the primary reference is to earthly dignities.

### **“IN THIS AGE”**

He sits far above “every name that is named, not only in this world” (*aion*, age); the great names of this age are below our Lord. The writer of Hebrews took pains to point out to Israel that even Moses was inferior to Messiah (Christ), as a servant is less than his Master. But what an effort religious leaders are making today to show that Jesus was only a man, and as such to be ranked with the best men.

On one of the great church buildings of New York, a group of the world’s famous ones appears over the door - such as Emerson, Einstein, Confucius, Buddha, etc., and with them the figure of Christ as one among many! Not so speaks the Spirit of Truth; in His setting forth of the majesty of the Divine Son of God, there are none that can be compared; He is “far above” all. In this continued attempt to exalt humanity, there is to be recognised the working of him who deceived our first parents with the falsehood, “Ye shall be as gods.”

### **“THE AGE TO COME”**

“But also in that which is to come.” The coming age also yields no name that ranks with that of our Lord. In that age, moreover, the now-dominant spirit-forces shall be bound. Their successors, the glorified Church, shall recognise the pre-eminence of their exalted King. United with Him, as Head and Body, they will have become manifestly His “fullness.” He fills “all in all,” but has chosen to do so through His Body. Thus, in the age to come, the members of Christ shall have an active ministry for God throughout the limitless extent of His universe.

### **“UNDER HIS FEET”**

“Hash put all things under his feet.” The feet are members of the Body. How wonderful to think that the least and lowest members of the Body of the Lord, those who in a sense are the very soles of the feet, are far above all the mighty forces we have been considering. Yet so it is. What need for the Church to awake to an appreciation of her mighty place of privilege. Exalted to rule over the spiritual powers of the air, how often she fails in her ministry of authority, or grovels before them in fear.

### **“HEAD OVER ALL”**

“Head over all things to the church.” We have little grasped the force of this marvellous truth. We think of it as if it indicated that Christ was simply in all things and circumstances and places the Church’s Head. Let us reverse the words to bring out

mote clearly their deep significance: “Head to the church over all things.” His being Head over all things is for the Church’s sake, that the Church, His Body, may be head over all things through Him. We need to sit reverently and long before these mighty truths, that their tremendous meaning may grasp our hearts. In this attitude the Spirit of Truth can lift us into their comprehension, which the human mind alone will always fail to compass.

## THE OPERATION OF GOD

The argument which we have been following has been thus far centred in the Epistle to the Ephesians. We pass, for a few minutes, to the Epistle to the Colossians, that we may view from a different standpoint how completely this whole matter of the Authority of the Believer is based on the working of the Father, and how the efficacy of that working depends on the correlated truth of the subjection of Christ to Him. Though coequal with the Father, the Eternal Son accepted a subordinate place, and undertook the task of reconciling, through the blood of His cross, all things unto God (1:20). Having for this purpose yielded Himself under the power of death, He was quickened by “the operation of God” the Father (2:12).

Let us read carefully 2:12-15, noting that the working here indicated is all on the part of God the Father. It is He who (verse 13) quickened the saints together with Christ and forgave their trespasses. It is He who (verse 14) blotted out the adverse decrees of the law, which stood in the way of His people, and nailed the cancelled handwriting to the cross of His Son. It is He who (verse 15) spoiled (*lap-ekdusamenoj*, completely stripped) the mighty principalities and powers that had opposed the resurrection of the Lord, and led them captive in triumphal procession in Christ.

A frequent misunderstanding of this passage is that the Lord Jesus “stripped off” from Himself the clustering powers of darkness overthrowing and putting them to an open shame. But a correct rendering shows clearly that the Agent is God the Father. Of what does He “strip” the powers of the air? Of the authority that had been theirs. Death is the penalty of sin; and when Christ, bearing the burden of the world’s guilt, went down to death, they sought to exercise their ancient prerogative and hold Him under its power. But, in the wisdom of the Father, the yielding of the Righteous One to death discharged the long-established bond of the Law. Exultantly, the Father nailed the cancelled bond to the cross of His Son; then, “stripping” of their authority the discomfited principalities and powers, He handed this authority to His Son. The “show” (triumphal procession), which the apostle figuratively uses, corresponds to the elevation of the Son above His enemies, mentioned in Ephesians.

Thus, in Colossians there is stressed the Father’s working in the active thwarting and overthrowing of the hostile powers, and their subjugation to His Son; while in Ephesians the Son is seen seated above these in all the authority of the Father’s throne. The Authority of the Believer is not taught so fully in Colossians, although the statement is made that, in Him His people are “complete” (literally, made full). That is to say, through union with Him, they partake of; the fullness of the Godhead, which is practically another form of being “blessed with all spiritual blessings.”

## CHAPTER 6

### THE FAILURE OF THE CHURCH

We saw in a previous section, the Lord as Head over all. His position and power are supreme. Why, then, is there not more manifest progress? Because a head is wholly dependent upon its body for the carrying out of its plan. All the members of its body must be subservient, that, through their coordinated ministry, may be accomplished what is purposed. The Lord Jesus “Head over all things to the church, which is his body,” is hindered in His mighty plans and working, because His Body has failed to appreciate the deep meaning of His exaltation, and to respond to the gracious impulses which He is constantly sending for its quickening.

It is a most vital truth of the divine working that *the Word of God* is the pattern by which the ministry of the Church is framed. The glory of the Body of Christ is the fact that its members are living members, each with a personal will. The Holy Spirit comes into these individual members in order to bring them into unity with the will and purposes of the Head. But this is not done through inward impulse alone. Inward impulse inaugurates obedience towards the Head, but the renewed mind can not be fully instructed save through the Word. Consequently, it is only as the Word is carefully meditated upon, understood, and obeyed, that the Head has freedom of action through its members. How little the average member feeds, with careful mastication, upon the Word, most of us know from our own experience.

The importance of this can be seen by comparing Ephesians 5:18ff with Colossians 3:16ff. In the first passage, the stirring of the inward emotions of the heart, with the consequent subjection of believers one to another, in their various relations, is indicated as the working of *the Spirit of God* in His fullness, but, in the second passage, exactly the same results are pointed out to be the result of the rich indwelling of the Word of Christ. The Word of Christ is the setting forth of His will in a form that is understandable by the renewed mind. But the renewed mind, while understanding the Word, lacks power to perform it. The fullness of the Spirit is the incoming of the Spirit of God to empower the human spirit for the carrying into effect of the accepted will of the Head.

Thus, unless the Word richly indwells for the instruction of the mind, the Spirit of God, although present in His fullness, has nothing to work upon. The impulses of the Head can not be translated by Him into appropriate action through the Body, but are often like the immature motions of a child. The Head is thereby hindered because the Body has not grown up into the stature of a perfect man. In divine patience the Head waits. Brethren, we are to blame greatly, not only for our own weakness, but also for “the hands that hang down and the palsied knees.” God help us to realise this, and to fulfil our ministry through the Word both to others and to the Lord.

## **CHAPTER 7**

### **THE QUALIFICATIONS FOR AUTHORITY**

It has been pointed out more than once in this study that the authority of which we are speaking is the portion of every believer. It is not a special gift imparted in answer to prayer, but the inherent right of the child of God because of his elevation with Christ to the right hand of the Father. He has become, through the rich mercy of God, an occupant of the Throne of the Lord, with all that it implies of privilege and responsibility.

This elevation took place potentially at the resurrection of the Lord and because of the believer's inclusion in Him. The elevation is wholly of the wisdom and grace of the Father. We do not "climb the heavenly steeps" by any act of faith or devotion on our part. It is ours simply to recognise the fact of this position, and to take our place in humble acceptance, giving all the glory and honour to God.

Let us recall four words to which mention has been previously made. They are "to us-ward who believe." In the former reference, we emphasised the first two, pointing out that all the demonstration of the omnipotence of God in Christ pointed manward. We shall now lay stress upon the latter two: "to us-ward who believe." It is not enough that the Divine Fullness outpours unstinted supplies; there must be a receptive heart and attitude on our part. A bottle may be submerged in the waters of a fountain. But, if the cork is unremoved, the holder may wait indefinitely, and at last carry it away empty. In accord with this simile, multitudes of truly spiritual believers are, as it were, immersed in the omnipotence of God; it presses them on every side. There is a longing for its experience, and a belief that it should be theirs, and a readiness to receive, these things being the witness of their spirits to the truth which the Holy Ghost has unfolded in the Word. Yet, because their minds have been "holden" as they have read the Word, the simplicity and the glory of this truth have not dawned upon them. Do we not need, indeed, continually to pray with deep heart-humility that "the eyes of our mind may be enlightened"?

#### **BELIEF**

"To us-ward who believe." Few comprehend the primary thought of "belief." It has a twofold meaning, fraught with deep significance. In it are combined two old Anglo-Saxon words: "be," to live or exist; and "lifan," which conveys the thought of accordance. Thus to believe means literally "to live in accordance with." We are accustomed to consider "belief" as simply mental acquiescence with some particular truth. But its root leads us on to action; that which the mind accepts, the will must obey. We do not truly believe, therefore, unless our conviction is manifested in our life. Thus understood, "belief" stands on a par with its great synonym "faith," which, in its deeper sense, means not only to have trust in a person but to manifest that trust by practical committal.

Do we believe that God "hath quickened us together with Christ, and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus"? If we do, our reaction to it will be a fervent: "Lord, I accept Thy gracious word. I believe that Thou hast thus wrought for me. In humble faith I do now take my seat in the heavenly places

in Christ Jesus at Thy right hand. Teach me how to fulfil this sacred ministry, how to exercise the authority which Thou hast entrusted to me. Train me day by day that I may attain to the full stature of the perfect man in Christ, so that in me Thy purpose of the ages may be fulfilled. Amen.”

If we are walking in the spirit, our normal life is in the heavenlies. To secure the consciousness of this, there must be the daily acceptance of the fact. Let us, morning by morning, as one of our first acts of worship, take our seat with Christ (as suggested in the previous paragraph) and return thanks to God for all that it implies. Let us often remind ourselves that we are seated far above all the powers of the air, and that they are in subjection to us. As our faith learns to use the Name and the Authority of Jesus, we shall 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 the uttering of petitions, and will increasingly manifest the exercise of a spiritual authority that recognises no national boundaries, but fearlessly binds the forces of darkness in any part of the world.

### **HUMILITY**

While belief thus introduces us to our place of throne-power, only humility will ensure our retaining it. As we compare the abounding grace of God, and our own utter unworthiness, the question arises, Should we need such a warning? Praise God, it becomes less necessary as the soul grows in grace, and the likeness of the Son increases in us. But we know little of the plague of our own hearts, if we think the danger is ever over. The forces against whom we contend the principalities and powers, the world-rulers of this darkness, the hosts of wicked spirits in the heavenlies, know us far better than we know ourselves. As we attack them, and authority is nought but a long, drawn-out warfare against them, their return-stroke is often swift and crushing. With a strategy gained in long experience in spiritual battles, they know that the offensive is their best mode of defense. One of their tested weapons is spiritual pride, and too often it proves effective.

Victory over the powers of the air, from their dread prince downwards, is a demonstrated possibility. But its attainment is alone through the employment of Divine aid. Now, since Eden, man has forgotten that God is essential; through the intervening ages he has constantly sought to show himself self-sufficient. Christ was the first of all our race that ever cast Himself fully upon God. “He trusted in God, let him deliver him,” was the sneer of the enemy at Calvary. But at Calvary, the One who had thus fully trusted, could not be delivered. He must go down to death, for the sin question of the world was involved, and the shedding of His precious blood was necessary for atonement. So, “He was crucified through weakness” (2 Corinthians 13:4). When this was accomplished, nothing more stood in the way. God raised Him from the dead, stripped His foes of their authority, and set Him on high over them.

With believers, the consuming desire to be independent is something which even the regenerate heart does not fully overcome. Often, just after some signal victory has been gained, there comes the subtle whisper of the enemy, and the overcomer is swiftly shorn of strength through feeling that he is strong.

## **BOLDNESS**

With profound humility, there may go, however, the greatest boldness in the Name. True boldness is faith in full manifestation. When God has spoken, to hold back is not humility but unbelief. In the exercise of authority, there is needed a Divine courage that fear is nothing but God, and reaches out strong hands to bind and to restrain all that is contrary to Him. But with this courage, there must be a continual and close abiding in God, a spirit that is alert to every urge and check from Him, and a mind that is steeped in the Word of God.



## CHAPTER 8

### FEAR

The heavenlies, while the place of “every spiritual blessing” (1:3), are, as well the place of most intense conflict. Let the believer, whose eyes have been opened to the comprehension of his throne rights in Christ, definitely accept his seat, and begin to exercise the spiritual authority which it confers upon him. He quickly realises that he is a marked man. Whereas, in his previous ministry, he may have firmly believed in the presence and working of the powers of darkness, and often earnestly prayed against them, there comes now a new consciousness of their existence and imminence. Bitterly they resent and resist his entrance into their domain, and his interference with their workings. Implacable and malignant, they concentrate their hatred against him in an intense warfare, in which there is no discharge. If attacks against his spirit are successfully resisted, assaults may come in mind, or body, or family, or circumstances.

The place of special privilege thus becomes a place of special danger. That there is no truth that encounters such opposition in its presentation is the testimony of those who have brought it forward by voice or pen. We have known of workers, who have taught these truths with acceptance, who have been quite overthrown in spirit or in body, and their ministry rendered useless. Yet, since God Himself, with an eternal purpose in view, has introduced His people into this sphere, we can not doubt that full provision has been made for their safety.

### THE PANOPLY OF GOD

The only place of safety is the occupation of the seat itself. It is “far above” the enemy. If the believer abides steadfastly by faith in this location, he can not be touched. Consequently the enemy puts forth all his “wiles” to draw him down in spirit, for, once out of his seat, his authority is gone, and he is no longer dangerous, and, further, he is open to attack.

At this point is seen the meaning of the message of chapter 6. To maintain his place against the wiles of the devil, the believer must be constantly arrayed in full armour. The different parts of this armour symbolise certain spiritual attitudes which he must maintain. It is most important to understand that the armour itself when worn constitutes the protection of the believer, and not his activity against the foe. Fully harnessed, he is fully kept, and is unhampered in his ministry of authority. All that he need be concerned about is, like a good soldier, to keep his armour bright and well secured about him.

Let us note briefly the meaning of the various parts of the panoply: no item can be omitted. There is (1) “the girdle of truth,” the clear understanding of God’s Word, which, like a soldier’s belt holds the rest of the armour in place. (2) “The breastplate of righteousness,” not, as often stated, the righteousness of Christ, but rather the active obedience to the Word which he has received. (3) The “feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace,” a faithful ministry in the heralding of the Word. (4) “The shield of faith” (*thureos*, the large door-shaped shield covering the whole body), which indicates his complete refuge under the blood of Calvary, where no power of the enemy can penetrate. (5) “The helmet of salvation” (called elsewhere “the hope of

salvation” - 1 Thessalonians 5:8). It is a remarkable fact that the hope of salvation, the coming of the Lord Jesus, is the only helmet that seems able to protect the head in these days of apostasy from the truth. (6) “The sword of the Spirit,” which shows the Word of God used in an active sense, even as the “girdle” shows it in a defensive one. (7) “All-prayer,” the training of the faculties God-ward by constant approach to God.

The emphasis in chapter 6 is laid on victory. Note the following paraphrase which brings out the full force of verse 13: “Wherefore take up with you to the battle the whole armour of God that you may be able to successfully withstand in the evil day, and having overthrown all foes, to remain unshaken.” There is no suggestion of defeat. Secure within his armour, the believer may disregard the enemy, and give his entire attention to the exercise of the ministry to which he has been called.

## **CHAPTER 9**

### **THE PRACTICAL EXERCISE OF AUTHORITY**

The believer has now accepted the place of exaltation with his Lord. There has opened for him a life of holiness in the presence of God, and of watchfulness in the presence of the enemy, in a deeper sense than he has known before. His first lesson will be personal. He must learn the significance of the term "Satan" (the Adversary), and come to understand why one of his titles is "Accuser of the brethren." Just as Joshua (Zechariah 3:1) , when he came to stand before the Angel of Jehovah, found "Satan standing at his right hand to be (literally) Satan," so will the spiritually-energetic child of God. He will encounter a constant stream of accusations in his own heart. These will trouble him, until he discovers that the purpose of the enemy is to turn him in upon himself, and, through the creating of a consciousness of personal unworthiness, draw him down from the place of perfect faith. He learns to "overcome him by the blood of the Lamb" (Revelation 12:11). That is to say, he presents the Blood as his only answer to these accusations.

But he speedily learns a further use for this divine provision. The Blood represents, not only the cleansing from the guilt and power of sin, but it is also the witness of that overwhelming victory gained at Calvary, by virtue of which the Lord is now seated on high. Once this is grasped, the believer sees that he has not to fight against the foe, but simply to hold over him an already-accomplished triumph, the authority of which he shares to the full. Not all at once the full vision comes, but, as he holds his place and exercises his ministry, there will be a gradual perfecting in the heavenly warfare. It will be in his province, as concerns the hosts of darkness, "to bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron," and, in that approaching day of full exaltation in the presence of the King, "to execute upon them the judgment written." Oh; that all God's people might come to the understanding of their high calling, for it is expressly stated: "This honour have all his saints" (Psalm 149:8-9).

### **THE LIMITATION OF AUTHORITY**

Let it ever be held in mind that the authority committed to the believer is over the powers of the air, and never over his fellow men or their wills. He is called to bind the unseen forces, but to deliver his brethren. Satan's constant aim is the subjugation of the human will to himself; God's purpose is the full liberation of the will that the freed spirit, through glad acquiescence in the Divine Will, may glorify his Creator. Human control of the will of another, as manifested in hypnotism, etc., is obtained through the use of occult powers latent in the soul, and is as unlawful for the Christian as wizardry and necromancy, which are directly forbidden in the Word of God. Following are a few simple examples of authority in exercise.

### **RELEASE FROM OPPRESSION OF BODY**

Just a year prior to this writing, contact was made in a country district with an earnest young pastor and his equally efficient wife - equally efficient in spirit at least, but in body sorely hindered. For long she had suffered from what had been diagnosed as serious heart trouble, and for which medical treatment was being taken. One symptom was the frequent recurrence of severe pains, causing fainting spells. The husband stated

that he had several times, on coming into the house, found her lying unconscious on the floor.

While conversing with the wife, she mentioned that her father was a spiritist, and that she had been expert in former days with the planchette. The question was asked: "Is it not probable, sister, that your present physical trouble and your difficulty in receiving healing, is due to the past?" "No," was the serious reply "for I was never a medium in the ordinary sense. I simply used the planchette and many interesting and remarkable incidents of its use were narrated." "Nevertheless," the point was pressed "in using the planchette, your body had to be surrendered to the evil spirit. There is little question in my mind that the difficulty lies there. Your connection with these powers should be acknowledged and confessed. Then a definite stand, on the authority of the Lord, should be taken, absolutely refusing the further working of evil spirits in your body, which has been purchased by the precious blood."

About three weeks after, a letter was received from the sister in question. After the visitor's departure, the light had come; confession had been made; and she and her husband had unitedly refused the further oppression of the enemy. She has never had another attack of the heart trouble, and has been blessed in her service greatly.

### **RELEASE FROM OPPRESSION OF MIND**

Some months ago, after a service in one of our cities, two women came asking an interview. The appearance of one gave an immediate understanding of the situation, which was confirmed by conversation. There had been earnest seeking of deep spiritual experience, which was followed by a sudden attack of intense despondency. The attacks persisted, until, after three years, the mind was in complete bondage. All joy had fled, and only a feeble hold of salvation was retained. Suggestions of suicide were frequent, passing with an urgency that was hard to resist.

The following line of approach was taken, after definitely asserting in prayer the power of the Ascended Lord, and the believer's throne union with Him. "Sister, this trouble is clearly the oppression of evil spirits, which have obtained a hold over you in some manner. These thoughts of self-destruction are directly prompted by him who is a deceiver and a murderer. You are a Christian and united with Christ. This afternoon may be for you, if you will, the last occasion of the manifestation of Satanic power." In a simple manner, her place of victory and authority in Christ was shown from the Word. She was urged to take it audibly before those who were witnesses (her sister, a friend, and the speaker). After full assertions of her faith and her' acceptance of what Christ had gained and the Father had bestowed, the party kneeled in victorious prayer. As the group arose, one of the friends remarked: "She looks different already." There was a life and animation, most noticeable after the deadness of her previous expression.

A few weeks ago, a letter came: "I feel as if I were saved all over again." Joy and peace had returned; the Holy Spirit had come; and soul-saving work had been granted to her.

## **AUTHORITY OVER EXCESSIVE ANGER**

“Be ye angry and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath,” the apostle charges the readers of the epistle we have been studying; “neither give place to the devil.” There is an intimate connection between sinful anger and the prince of evil, and sustained wrath will surely open the door to his entrance. In a certain city two Christian workers, husband and wife, had fallen into the enemy’s snare of wrath. One day their quarrelling had reached a shameful height and was attracting attention, as it had done before. The writer and his wife were within hearing, and at prayer. Quietly and definitely they took authority over the spirits of evil who were behind the ostensible cause, and commanded their withdrawal. Almost immediately, the quarrelling stopped. As the authority was day by day held and renewed, the spirits were kept in check. Eventually however, the two separated for they did not seek victory for themselves.

One of the Filipino workers, when a student in the Bible School, was of a very quick and ungovernable temper. This having been stirred up by a trivial matter, he utterly lost control of himself, and speedily became almost insane with rage. The principal and the writer stepped into the next apartment, and kneeling down, took the authority of the Lord over the spirits that were working upon him. In a few minutes he was quiet, and it was possible to deal with him.

Similar cases occurred in the Girls’ School. On one occasion, after a fight among them, the ringleader was isolated in the office, where she continued shrieking wildly. The writer stepped into the office, sat down, and quietly, and inaudibly exercised the authority of the Lord, commanding the evil spirits to leave the place. The girl instantly ceased, so suddenly that the lady principal asked what had been done to her.

## **AUTHORITY OVER FEAR**

In travelling among the islands off the coast of Mindanao in a native boat, a considerable swell was encountered. The son of the writer began to show fear, which became almost uncontrollable. This was most unusual as he was normally fond of the water, and was an excellent sailor, having frequently travelled up and down the entire China coast, where storms are severe. He begged to be taken ashore; and as the whole affair seemed to be directed against the progress of the evangelistic top, the writer quietly took the authority of Christ over the spirits of fear and rebuked them, though saying nothing openly. In a very few minutes the lad seemed to change completely, and for the remainder of the journey, lasting several days, there was no further difficulty. The second night after, while in the centre of a wide bay, and about twelve miles from shore, a heavy squall was encountered, and an outrigger broke. The danger was imminent, but, though the lad was fully aware of it, and though the waves were washing quite over the boat, he manifested not the slightest shrinking. Other instances of fear, involving older and experienced missionaries, are personally known.

## **DEMON OBSESSION**

Coming down the West River, in the south of China, in 1026, there was a man on board being taken to Hong Kong for mental treatment. He was a foreigner and a member of the Customs Staff in Wuchow. Early in the morning, he leaped overboard,

but was rescued and placed in a cabin on board. A little later he cut his throat from ear to ear. The boat dropped anchor, and native doctors came, sewed and dressed his wounds. After they had left him, the writer was asked to talk with him. He was lying on the cabin bunk, with his hands secured by a rope. As soon as the cabin was entered, and before any question was asked, he said: "They told me to do it." "Who told you?" "The voices; they are talking to me all the time. They told me to throw myself overboard; and when I was taken from the water, they said there was no hope for me as I had tried to take my life, and said I must cut my throat." Then, growing excited, he cried, "They are talking to me now; they say I must send you away. Go, Go!" He was quite beside himself. The answer was made: "These are demon voices that speak with you. I am not afraid of them. I have come in here to help you." After prayer, he quieted, and no recurrence of the trouble occurred up to the time he was taken from the boat to the hospital at Hong Kong. He was not delivered, but the trouble was under control while the worker was near. Here it may be said that demons recognise at once anyone who can exercise the authority of the Lord, and they are afraid of him. But full deliverance in such a case as this can not take place without the consent of the one attacked. Other examples could be given.

### **AUTHORITY OVER OPPOSERS OF THE TRUTH**

Previous illustrations are from the personal experience of the writer. The following is by a lady now deceased. In a town in the north of England, great opposition was being manifested to some religious meetings by a group of the rougher sort, stirred by certain communistic leaders. After a short time, the pastor called some of his people together, and asked them to stand with him against the power of the enemy. About a hundred gathered, and after prayer, they definitely repeated with him: "In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by His authority we bind the strong man from stirring up these people, and from attacking God's work." A hymn of praise was sung and the members dispersed. The very next day trouble rose among the leaders of the opposition, some of them left town, and no further hindrance to work was encountered.

### **INFERENCES**

Such instances as the foregoing might be multiplied, but these have been selected as illustrating different phases of the question. They are sufficient to show that there are many situations where the direct working of spirits of evil may be inferred. In all such situations the authority of the Lord is available for the instructed believer. And, where in faith the obedient saint claims his throne rights in Christ, and boldly exerts his authority, the powers of the air will recognise and obey. There may be unwillingness and delay on their part, and time may be required. But, once the word of authority is spoken, it is not necessary to repeat it. The believer must "stand" (6:13), and strengthen himself in God as he waits. He will learn with joy, as did the disciples of old, that "even the demons are subject unto us through thy name."

Apply now these lessons to the great problems of the extension of the Kingdom that face us. Here as the shortage of funds. We speak of the financial distress, but is any work of the devil today distressed for funds? A walk on the streets of New York after working hours will speedily give the answer. Satan is choking the channels of Christian benevolence in many and shrewd ways, but he leaves free those which minister to pleasure and sensuality. The writer knows intimately of several cases in widely

separated parts of the land where funds are tied up, which, if release would be instrumental in the advancement of the Gospel. Here are closed lands. Human governmental authority seems responsible for these. But in the background, there stand the shadowy forms of the great princes (Daniel 10), whose dicta rule the minds and wills of the men whom we see. Afghanistan, Arabia, Tibet, and other lesser areas are thus garrisoned against the entry of the truth. They will thus remain until there rises in the Church believing groups, who shall “agree” that this state of affairs shall no longer continue. And, as such bands, with one accord, exercise a spiritual will of freedom for these lands, saying in the name of the Lord, “This shall not be!” the unseen dominant forces shall be dominant no longer, but shall yield ground, and the barriers shall fall.

Here are hindrances to advance in the field-work. Mohammedanism meets us with bigotry and jealousy; paganism with fear and hatred; ignorance binds the heathen mind in darkness that seems impenetrable. Fierce attacks, such as recently occurred in French West Africa, fall upon the workers, and some are cut off. Dissensions rise in the ranks of brethren, and the Spirit of peace withdraws. Behind every such situation the presence of the same malign powers can be assumed. The solution is in their displacement - we alone are to blame that they continue in power.

The same principle is often applicable in personal evangelism. A soul under conviction has great difficulty in grasping the truth, or in yielding to it. His mind is blinded and bound. A quiet attitude of victory over the opposing spirits has often brought swift release. A Filipino student was suspected of lying, but was resolutely standing by his falsehood. Quietly the position was taken: “In the name of the Lord, I rebuke these lying spirits.” Suddenly the student broke down, confessed, and wept his way through to victory.

Will it not be worth while for the believer to meet in the coming age men and women who have been delivered “out of the snare of the devil,” and loosed from varying forms of bondage, because he has steadfastly stood for their deliverance for long periods against the fierce and incessant assaults of these deadly foes?

## CHAPTER 10

### THE FINAL OUTCOME OF AUTHORITY

The question is often asked: Why does God permit this or that condition? Does not the answer lie here? God has planned that man shall, through the out-working of Redemption, regain the place of authority in creation that he has lost. To this end, Christ, having conquered for man, sits as his Representative in the seat destined for him when redemption is fully manifested. In the interim, the wonderful provision exists that man shall be reckoned in Christ, and shall, to the limit of his spiritual understanding and obedience, be endowed with the authority of His name.

Accordingly, God throws upon man the responsibility for the continuance of the conditions which we question. We feel they ought not to be. We realise that they are the working of the enemy. We cry to God to rebuke the enemy, and to alter things. Through the teaching of the Word, He replies: "My children, rebuke the enemy yourselves. The authority over him is yours. Its responsibility I have committed to you. I desire you to learn in these things to prevail. I have purposed a high and holy ministry for you in the coming age. This is for you the time of testing and preparation. Be strong and of a good courage, and none shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life."

Slowly, believers are awaking to their high place of privilege in Christ, and are assuming the responsibilities which it involves. The body of the manchild, who is to rule all nations with a rod of iron, is nearing completion. Born of the Church, but not itself the Church, the body consists of many members with widely-differing offices. These members are out of every age and people. On its ascension to the Throne of God, which now potentially it shares, the rebellious powers of the air, which have so long resisted Divine authority, shall be fully and forever dispossessed of their seats to make room for the new incumbents.

Before that event, it is recorded that "the powers of the heavens shall be shaken." The initial tremors of that shaking are now taking place. Every fully-yielded heart that crowns Jesus King increases the consternation of the panic-stricken hosts. Conscious of their impending overthrow, they are seeking by fierce attacks on every front to hold back the final issue. Now is no time for the Church of Christ to hold back. Let us meet attack by counter attack. Faith is needed, courage, determination, sacrifice. We have these and more, we have Calvary, with all that it means. Men and women are needed who will meet God in all that He offers, who will take up the cause of the closed lands and reply to the challenge of the great heathen religions by an aggressive warfare in the heavenlies.

"Who is on the Lord's side? Who will face the foe?"