

## PRAYER AND AUTHORITY

**T**here are several kinds of prayer. There are prayers of thanksgiving, supplication, intercession etc., but here I want to talk about the prayer of authority. Our words have power if there is some authority structure behind them. For example; a police officer has more authority, when he speaks in the line of his duty, than the average citizen does. Why is this? Because he has a legal structure to back up his words. When he gets outside of the authority granted to him by this structure, he has no more authority than anyone else. A good policeman knows what authority he has and where his jurisdiction ends .

God has no limits on His authority except those imposed by His own nature. For example; God can not lie because He is truth and no lie can be found in Him. Because God is righteous, He can not use His authority for evil. We find some examples of God's authority in the story of creation. Genesis 1 : 3, ***Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light.*** Since God has authority over light and darkness, the light obeyed His command. (Genesis 1 : 9-10) ***Then God said, "Let the waters below the heavens be gathered in one place, and let the dry land appear" ; and it was so. And God called the dry land earth, and the gathering of the waters He called seas; and God saw that it was good.*** Here again we see God exercising His authority over the elements. He simply speaks and the elements obey Him. In chapters 1 & 2 of Genesis, we see God giving certain authority and responsibilities to man. ***Then God said, " Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth....And God created man in His own image... male and female He created them. And God blessed them; and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky, and over every living thing that moves on the earth." Then God said, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the surface of all the earth, and every tree which has fruit yielding seed; it shall be food for you;"... Then the Lord God took man and put him into the***

*garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it. And the Lord God*

1

*commanded the man, saying, "From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you shall surely die."* So it was that God gave provisions, responsibilities, authorities, and restrictions to man. As long as man was content to live within the structure that God laid out for him, everything was all right.

Let us now jump ahead and examine the authority of Jesus, the way He used it and how He imparted it to His disciples. The fact that Jesus had authority did not escape the religious leaders. (Matthew 21:23-27) *" And when He had come into the temple, the chief priests and elders of the people came to Him as He was teaching, and said, ' By what authority are you doing these things, and who gave you this authority?' And Jesus answered and said to them, ' I will ask you one thing too, which if you tell Me, I will also tell you by what authority I do these things. The baptism of John was from what source, from heaven or from men?' And they began reasoning among themselves, saying, ' If we say, ' From heaven,' He will say to us, ' Then why did you not believe him?' ' But if we say, ' From men,' we fear the multitude; for they all hold John to be a prophet.' And answering Jesus, they said, ' We do not know.' He also said to them, ' Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.' "* The leaders had a legitimate question. They were charged with maintaining order and safeguarding the accuracy of teaching concerning God and His laws; but they were not going to accept Christ's answer any more than they would the answer concerning John the Baptist. Since all authority ultimately resides in God, there is no authority apart from the permission of God. In (Luke 10:22) Jesus said, *"All things have been handed over to Me by My Father, and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, and who the Father is except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him."* It is obvious that Jesus received His authority from the Father as part of the "All things" which were handed over to Him. When there is a power structure, there is always a chain of command and there are rules that control that power structure. Except for God, Who is at the top of the power

structure and Who invented it, every participant is accountable to work within that structure and to do so according to the rules. There

2

need be no rules for God because He is perfect, just, omniscient, righteous, and He is governed by His perfect nature. We do business differently with those over whom we have control, than we do with those who have control over us. We can command those over whom we have control and we suggest and make requests of those who have control over us. We must always remember that our authority rests in the structure that has granted us that authority and that we have absolutely no authority of our own. We must always come in the name, (authority), of someone else who has authority over us and to whom we are accountable.

Jesus had authority over inanimate forces and objects. We are going to examine these here and see just how He exercised His authority. We will start with the account of the fig tree in (Matthew 21:18-19) "***Now in the morning, when He returned to the city, He became hungry. And seeing a lone fig tree by the road, He came to it, and found nothing on it except leaves only; and He said to it, 'No longer shall there ever be any fruit from you.' And at once the fig tree withered.***" Notice that Jesus did not pray; "Father make this tree wither and die because it has no figs on it.". He spoke directly to the tree because He had authority over the tree and He said; "***No longer shall there ever be any fruit from you.***" Because He had authority over the tree, the tree had to respond according to His words. There is another example of this principle in ( Mark 4:37-39 ) "***And there arose a fierce gale of wind, and the waves were breaking over the boat so much that the boat was already filling up. And He Himself was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they awoke Him and said to Him, 'Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?' And being aroused, He rebuked the wind and the sea, 'Hush, be still.' And the wind died down and it became perfectly calm.***" In this case Jesus spoke to the wind and sea and just said to them, "***Hush, be still.***" and, because He had authority over them, they had no choice but to obey Him.

Jesus Has authority over demon spirits. Let us see how He deals with them in the Bible. ( Mark 1:23-26 ) "***And just then there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit; and he cried***

*out, saying, 'What do we have to do with You, Jesus of Nazareth? Have You come to destroy us? I know who You are—the Holy One of God!'" And Jesus rebuked him saying, 'Be*

3

*quiet, and come out of him!" And throwing him into convulsions, the unclean spirit cried out with a loud voice, and came out of him."* Here again we see that Jesus speaks to the spirit and since He has authority over the spirit, he must obey. When Jesus met two demon possessed men from Gadara the demons got nervous and asked if He was going to cast them out and asked Him to send them into a herd of swine. ( Matthew 8:31-32 ) **" And the demons began to entreat Him, saying, ' If You are going to cast us out, send us into the herd of swine.' and He said to them, 'Begone!' And they came out, and went into the swine, and behold, the whole herd rushed down the steep bank into the sea and perished in the waters."** Here again, Jesus spoke to the demons and said only one word to them, "Begone!" and they obeyed because He has authority over them.

We will now examine some healings that Jesus performed and exactly what He prayed in each case. In order to shorten this up a bit, I will describe the healing and give the location of the passage. In (Matthew 12:9-13) we have the case of the man with the withered hand. In this case Jesus said, **" Stretch out your hand!"** He spoke to the man and commanded him to do the formerly impossible.

Some times Jesus asked for confirmation of faith on the part of the one seeking healing. In (John 5:1-17) there is the account of the man at the pool of Bethesda who had been lame for 38 years. In V6 Jesus asked, **" Do you wish to get well?"** The man actually didn't answer His question. Then Jesus said, **"Arise, take up your pallet and walk."** V8

Some times He didn't have to ask about faith. (Matthew 8:2-3) **" And behold a leper came to Him, and bowed down to Him, saying, 'Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean.' And He stretched out His hand and touched him, saying, 'I am willing; be cleansed.' And immediately his leprosy was cleansed."** In (Matthew 9:1-8) there is an account of a paralyzed man being brought on a bed by some of his friends and it says, **"Jesus seeing their faith.."** (V2) He could tell that they had faith just by looking at them. **" then He said to the paralytic- 'Rise, take up your bed,**

*and go home.' "* (V6) In (Matthew 8:5-13) we have the case of the centurion who has a sick servant. Jesus offers to go and heal him but the centurion says, ***"Lord, I am not worthy for You to come under my roof, but just say the word, and my servant will be***

4

***healed. For I, too, am a man under authority, with soldiers under me; and I say to this one, 'Go!' and he goes, and to another, 'Come!' and he comes, and to my slave, 'Do this!' and he does it."*** (V8-9) It was obvious that this man knew about authority and how it works. This gave him great faith. Jesus simply said, ***" Go your way; let it be done to you as you have believed."*** (V13)

Some times Jesus spoke to a third party or just confirmed a healing without speaking to the sickness. In ( John 4:46-54 ) we have the account of the healing of the nobleman's son. In this case Jesus said, ***" Go your way; your son lives."*** (Verse 49)

Some times Jesus didn't say anything. (Matthew 8:14-15) ***"And when Jesus had come to Peter's home, He saw his mother-in-law lying sick in bed with a fever. And He touched her hand, and the fever left her; and she arose, and waited on Him."***

Another case is found in Matthew 20 : 29-34 where two blind men sitting by the road heard that Jesus was passing by and they began hollering at Him to have mercy on them. It says; ***"And moved with compassion, Jesus touched their eyes; and immediately they regained their sight and followed Him."*** No prayer is recorded.

Jesus has authority over death. In (Luke 7:11-17) we find the case of a funeral procession. A widow's only son had died. Jesus had compassion on her and He stopped the procession and said to the man in the coffin, ***" Young man, I say to you, arise!"*** (V14)

In the case of Lazarus, (John 11: 1-46) Jesus prayed to His Father; ***"Father, I thank thee that Thou hearest Me, And I knew that Thou hearest Me always ; but because of the people standing around I said it, that they may believe that Thou didst send Me."*** Then He cried loudly; ***"Lazarus, come forth."*** The fact that He prayed to His Father had nothing to do with the healing but was designed for the benefit of the crowd. Jesus spoke to the dead man.

JESUS GIVES AUTHORITY TO HIS APOSTLES

In the tenth chapter of Matthew we have the account of Jesus giving authority and instructions to His apostles. (v 1) ***"And having summoned His twelve disciples, He gave them authority over***

5

***unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every kind of disease and every kind of sickness.***" Then in (v 8) He gives them more instructions as to what they are to do. ***"Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons; freely you received, freely give."*** Some say that this power was only given to the apostles and that the authority died with them. There is no scripture to back that up. Furthermore, Jesus sent out seventy on another occasion with the same authority. The account is found in Luke ten. In verse 1 we read; ***"Now after this the Lord appointed seventy others, and sent them two and two ahead of Him to every city and place where He Himself was going to come.*** Then in (v8+9) Jesus says; ***"And whatever city you enter, and they receive you, eat what is set before you; and heal those in it who are sick and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.'"*** When the seventy reported back to Him we read; ***"And the seventy returned with joy, saying, 'Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name.'*** (v 17) Notice that these seventy had the authority over the demons but it was in the name (authority) of Jesus. In verse 19 Jesus says; ***"Behold, I have given you authority to tread upon serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall injure you."*** I think that it is important to note what Jesus did not give authority over. He didn't give them authority over Satan or angels and He did not give them authority over other people. The notion that we can "bind Satan" is ridiculous.

I think that perhaps an analogy would be helpful here to illustrate how authority works for the believer. Suppose that one of my grandsons came to me and said; "Grandpa, I have found the perfect bike for me and I was wondering if you would get it for me for my birthday." I ask him some questions about the bike including the cost and find out that it will cost about \$100. I agree to get the bike for him and I fill out a check to the store that has the bike and I sign the check. I inform my grandson that he can fill in the exact amount at the time of purchase. The next time I see my grandson, he asks me

when I am going to buy the bike for him. I again explain that I have already bought the bike for him. All he has to do is to fill out the amount on the check and the bike is his. It doesn't depend on his ability to pay but on mine. It will do him no good to keep coming to me for the bike because I have placed the power to have the bike in

6

his hands. It is his responsibility to exercise that power. Does that mean that he has the power on his own to buy the bike? No! He has that power only because I have that power and I gave that power to him. So who bought the bike? I did. Who should get the credit for buying the bike? I should. It is the same way with healing. We are given the authority to fill in the amount but it is Gods check and He has the funds in the bank to cover it. We can take no credit.

## MIRACLES DONE AFTER THE RESURRECTION

In the book of THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES we see how some of the apostles used the authority that Jesus gave them to do miracles. In chapter three we have the account of the healing of the lame man at the gate of the temple. In verses 6 and 7 Peter's words are recorded as he heals the lame man. ***"But Peter said, 'I do not possess silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you: 'In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene- walk!' And seizing him by the right hand, he raised him up; and immediately his feet and his ankles were strengthened."*** Peter identified his authority and said walk. He then acted on his faith and took hold of the man and raised him up. In Lydda, Peter found a man named Aeneas who had been paralyzed for eight years and he said to him; ***"Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you; arise, and make your bed."*** (Acts 9:34) And the Bible says that, ***All who lived at Lydda and Sharon saw him, and they turned to the Lord."*** (V 35) Near the town of Lydda was a town called Joppa. A believer in Joppa had just died. Her name was Dorcas, or sometimes called Tabitha. Since Peter was near by, the people called Peter to have the funeral service. The people took Peter into the room where the body lay and we read, ***"But Peter sent them all out and knelt down and prayed, and turning to the body, he said, 'Tabitha, arise.' And she opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter, she sat up."*** I take it that Peter prayed before he turned to the lady. If so, what would he be praying about? Could it be that he

was asking for instructions from God as to how to proceed? I don't know, but I think that it might be reasonable that he would do that. Peter wasn't the only Apostle that performed miracles. In Acts 8:5-8 we read; ***" And Philip went down to the city of Samaria and began proclaiming Christ to them. And the multitudes with one accord were giving attention to what was***

7

***said by Philip, as they heard and saw the signs which he was performing. For in the case of many who had unclean spirits, they were coming out of them shouting with a loud voice; and many who had been paralyzed and lame were healed. And there was much rejoicing in that city."*** In Acts 13:7-12 we read about a magician named Elymas who opposed Barnabas and Paul. And Paul said, ***" You are full of all deceit and fraud, you son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease to make crooked the strait way of the Lord? And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you will be blind and not see the sun for a time. And immediately a mist and a darkness fell upon him, and he went about seeking those who would lead him by the hand."*** (V 10-11) At Lystra, Paul met a man who had been lame from birth and he said to him, ***"Stand upright on your feet."*** And the man leaped up and began to walk. (Acts 14:10) In Acts 16:16-18 Paul encountered a slave girl that had a spirit of divination. Paul said, ***"I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her! And it came out at that very moment."*** It says in Acts 19:11-12 ; ***"And God was performing extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul, so that handkerchiefs or aprons were carried from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out."***

## IS HEALING FOR US TODAY?

Many people say that healing is not for us today. They say that it was only for the apostolic age. There is no scripture to indicate this, if it is taken in context. I have witnessed too many healings to believe that. In James 5:14-16 we read; ***"Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer of faith will restore the one who is sick, and the Lord***



*will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him. Therefore confess your sins to one another, so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.*" There is no expiration date given on this passage.

What happens when someone tries to exercise authority who is not saved and therefore has not been given this authority? We have

8

just such an account in the book of Acts chapter 19 and verses 13-17. Paul had been doing many miracles among the people and some unconverted Jews tried doing the same thing. We read; ***"But some of the Jewish exorcists, who went from place to place, attempted to name over those who had the evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, 'I adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preaches.' And seven sons of one Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, were doing this. And the evil spirit answered and said to them, 'I recognize Jesus, and I know about Paul, but who are you?' And the man, in whom was the evil spirit, leaped on them and subdued all of them and overpowered them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded."*** These people were impersonating a Christian but the demons knew better. These men used the name of Jesus like a good luck charm or some kind of formula but they were never given the right to use that name and the demons knew that they didn't have to obey them.

I think that the authority that Christ gives can be compared to a rich man leaving town for a time and giving you power of attorney to carry out his business while he is gone. You go down to the bank with the rich man and sign his name. The bank then will recognize that signature as his. You are given authority to act in the interest of the rich man in all of his affairs. You can sign agreements in the name of the rich man, you can write checks in his name, you can pay his bills, you are authorized to do what he would do in every respect. When it comes time to write a large check, you don't have to be concerned that you don't have the money to cover it because it is not written on your puny account but rather on the account of the rich man. That is the way it is with us; we don't have to worry that we can't heal anyone, we know that. But we don't come in our own authority but in the authority that Jesus has given to us to draw on His account. When we pray "in Jesus' name", we are saying that we are praying as His

representative for we have been given power of attorney to do so. As people who have been given power of attorney, we must be very careful not to abuse that privilege. We are not authorized to write checks for our own benefit but only to carry on His business. We need to keep His business and ours separate and not confuse them. In Bible days, important men had signet rings. These rings had symbols engraved on the face of the ring and when the man wanted to sign a document, a drop of sealing wax was melted onto the

9

document and the ring was pressed into the wax to leave an impression and that was recognized as the man's signature. Some times that ring would be given to a trusted servant so that he could do the rich mans business. It was understood that the very possession of the ring gave him power to act on behalf of the master. We don't hear much about Zerubbabel but listen to what God said about him. "***'On that day,' declares the LORD of hosts, 'I will take you Zerubbabel, son of Shealtiel, my servant,' declares the LORD, 'and I will make you like a signet ring, for I have chosen you,' declares the LORD of hosts.***" (Haggai 2:23) God was saying that He trusted Zerubbabel so much that He could sign God's name and He would honor it.

## NOT ALL PRAYERS ARE ANSWERED AS WE WANT

When Jesus went to Nazareth, His home town, the Bible records the following; "And ***they took offense at Him. But Jesus said to them, 'A prophet is not without honor except in his home town, and in his own household.'*** And he did not do many miracles there because of their unbelief," We see here that the unbelief of others affected the ministry of Jesus. Paul was successful in healing many sick folks but we see in II Timothy 4:20, "***Erastus remained in Corinth, but Trophimus I left sick at Miletus.***" It is hard to believe that no one thought to pray for poor Trophimus so that he could be healed. In any case he was left sick in Miletus. Then there is the case of Paul's thorn in the flesh found in II Corinthians 12:7-9 ***And because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet me - to keep me from exalting myself! Concerning***

*this I intreated the Lord three times that it might depart from me. And He said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.'* Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may dwell in me. It is my firm belief that we sometimes do not see answers to our prayers because we pray without actually knowing the will of God concerning that particular situation. Some times there may be unbelief on the part of the one praying or the one being prayed for. There are probably thousands of good reasons for God not

10

answering prayer in a particular case the way that we would want. Maybe an analogy would be helpful here. Suppose that you are a young police officer and you finally arrest a man that was suspected of dealing drugs, but he always seemed to get away. You caught him red handed. There is no way he will get out of this one; he will be put so far back in prison that they will have to pipe sunlight to him. The next day you find out that he has been let go. You can't figure out what you did wrong. What you don't know, and may never find out, is that this guy is cooperating with the authorities in order to catch the top man in the operation, so they let him go. The people who make your authority possible know the big picture and, based on that knowledge, have decided not to back your authority in this case. Does that mean that you have done something wrong? No! It simply means that you were operating with incomplete knowledge. Shouldn't you be told about this? Not necessarily. You must learn to trust the system and be convinced that if you do your part, everything will work out for the best. The same is true with our prayers and God. It is our job to pray and believe Him. But God is God and we must be content to let Him be God in our lives. If we believe that God loves us and will only do what is ultimately the best for us, then we will be content to let Him have His way. He doesn't owe us an explanation and we should trust Him enough so that we don't need one.

11

Paul Ziegler