

POSSESSING THE GATES OF THE ENEMY

Genesis 22:16-17

“By Myself I have sworn, says the LORD, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son - blessing I will bless you, and in multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies.”

The gates are symbols of authority. The king had a throne at the gates. The elders sat at the gates. Judgments were passed and sentences carried out. To possess the gates of the enemy, or Satan, is to displace Satan’s authority with that which is entrusted to us by Jesus Christ.

Jesus said, ***“Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you.”*** [Luke 10:19]

THE NATURE OF SPIRITUAL AUTHORITY

To understand the nature of spiritual authority, it is necessary to examine the relationship between words ‘authority’ and ‘power,’ as they are used in Christ’s statement, ***“Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you.”*** [Luke 10:19]

The Greek word translated as ‘authority,’ is ‘*exousia*,’ and its basic meaning is to have the right to rule or govern as one whose will and commands must be submitted to and obeyed.

The second Greek word ‘*dunamis*’ is translated as ‘power’ in this reading. It means to have an inherent strength, power, or ability to bring about a desired purpose.

To illustrate the relationship between the two words, we will use the example of a road transport and a traffic officer. A road transport has inherent power, and so the driver has ‘*dunamis*’ power at his disposal to accomplish his work. A traffic officer has very little power to stop the transport, but he has ‘*exousia*’ authority. When he holds up his hand the driver stops, because behind the officer’s authority is the whole weight of the Police Department, and if necessary, the resources of the State Government.

The distinction between the two words is not always made clear in the bible. The King James Version sometimes translates both ‘*exousia*’ and ‘*dunamis*’ as ***“power.”*** For instance, the King James renders the above reading as, ***“Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy...”*** To discern the meaning of the word translated as ‘power’ in the King James Version it is necessary to determine the Greek word from which it was translated, that is, ‘*exousia*’ or ‘*dunamis*.’

When the above reading is translated correctly, we see that Christ has not given us ‘dunamis’ power to overcome the power of Satan. Instead, He has entrusted us with the authority to use His name, and God has decreed that the authority attached to the name of Jesus is the greatest in all creation. ***“Therefore God has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”*** [Phil 2:9-11] We are to wield the authority of the name of Jesus in commanding the power of Satan as those who must be obeyed. For instance, in the name of Jesus we may cast out demons, bind the power of Satan from our circumstances, or loose those who are held in bondage.

It is also important to see that our authority is associated with our union with the Lord Jesus Christ. Just as the Traffic Officer is divested of his authority if he steps out of his official position, so too we lose our authority when we step out of our abiding relationship with Jesus Christ. Jesus said, ***“Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.....without Me you can do nothing.”*** [John 15:4-5] To wield the authority of Jesus’ name we must be united and one with Jesus, bound and yoked to Him so that we are of one mind and one heart with Him. He must initiate, and we must respond in obedience. It is He who confirms our legitimate authority and does the works.

Satan very well knows the basis of our authority, and knows that he does not have to submit to lawless or presumptuous wielding of the name of Jesus. In fact we may place ourselves in a hazardous situation, as did ***“some ...itinerant Jewish exorcists”*** who ***“took it upon themselves to call the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits, saying, “We exorcise you by the Jesus whom Paul preaches.”*** But because they were not united and one with the Lord Jesus, their lack of authority was obvious to the demons they were attempting to cast out. ***“And the evil spirit answered and said, ‘Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are you?’ Then the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, overpowered them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded.”*** [Acts 19:13-16]

WE HAVE NO AUTHORITY WITHOUT OBEDIENCE

Authority hinges on obedience. Unless we are obedient to the authority of the Lord within us, and what He has asked us to do or say, then He does not uphold our authority.

Christ's authority was always upheld because He was one with God the Father, and perfectly obedient to His will. Therefore He was able to say, ***“Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works.”*** [John 14:10] Jesus commanded as the Father directed Him, and the Father did the works. Similarly, we should use the authority of the name of Jesus as He directs us, and He responds by doing the works.

Now compare chains of authority operating through obedience, to the climate of lawlessness predicted by Jesus. He prophesied, ***“Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord. have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!”*** [Matthew 7:22-23]

Notice that Jesus is addressing those who are supposed to be Christians. They ***“had prophesied”***, ***“cast out demons”*** and ***“done many wonders”***, all in the authority of the name of Jesus. One thing was missing. They had denied the sovereign Lordship of Christ by not seeking, and then being obedient to His will. They had presumed that works initiated by the flesh would meet with His approval. His condemnation of their presumption in using His name to perform works of the flesh is severe. He will say, ***“I never knew you.”*** That is to say, ‘Your works are not of Me.’ ***“Depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.”***

SUMMARY

It is God’s desire for us to possess the gates of the enemy, that is, to receive Christ’s authority over all the power of Satan.

Our authority is dependent on being united and one with the Lord Jesus Christ.

He initiates, we respond, He does the work.

Those who use the name of Jesus without His initiating are acting in lawlessness. Their works are not the Lord’s works.