

Taking Authority

Introduction

The Biblical Christian life is a life whose purpose is to bear fruit, much fruit, for the glory of the Lord thy God. This fruit, as we have discussed in the previous class, is the imputed righteousness of Christ and the growing fullness of Christ in the redeemed. Fruit bring honor, renown and glory to the name of the Lord our God.

Yet, we are to bear fruit in a foreign land, a land occupied by the enemy of God. A land that hosts legions of wicked spirits, led by the devil, whose purpose is to kill, corrupt and destroy all that the Lord has made in His image. The devil and his army seek to prevent the harvest of fruit and to spoil the fruit which already exist.

Thus, the Christian finds himself in a battle, warfare. A battle between the Lord God and the devil. A battle for the souls of men. In this battle, the Christian is a soldier, an instrument of righteousness in the hands of God. A soldier who is enabled by the Spirit of the Lord to bear the light of Christ, enabled to do the works of Christ, to advance the light of God against darkness.

The Christian has a target on his back, in this world of the devil. The enemies of God will seek to attack his faith, his mind, his purpose, his family, his body, his reputation, and his righteousness. The enemy will accuse the Christian, before God, as unworthy, aiming to orchestrate his fall from grace.

In this hostile environment, the Christian is told to be of good faith. Not to worry. The victory is the Lord's. Though we walk through the valley of death, the rod and staff of the Lord protects and comforts us. (Psalm 23) And not only that, but he enables us to wield His rod against the enemy. He, the Lord, gives us His Spirit so we are overcomers, victorious in a battle already won by the captain of our salvation.

In this class, Taking Authority, we will delve into how the Christian can wield the power of God in his battle against the rulers, principalities and powers of darkness. We will discuss how Joshua could command the Lord to stop the orbit of the sun, so it stood still as he pursued the enemies of God. How Moses could wield the staff of God to separate the Red Sea, and to defeat the Egyptians.

Taking Authority is truly an extension of the class, The Biblical Christian life, for this matter is key to experiencing the joy of the Lord, key to pleasing the Lord, and integral to a fulfilling life in Christ Jesus.

The message of the Cross

On Calvary's hill, our Lord Christ Jesus conquered the rulers and authorities of the unseen kingdom of the devil. He ripped from the devil the dominion and power of sin and death over God's people. He cast out the devil as ruler and slave master over the saints of Christ. Satan, called the god of this world, the ruler of darkness, was rendered powerless by the Cross of Jesus Christ.

But how did this happen? And if the devil was rendered powerless against God's people, why is he still the author of confusion, temptation, evil, and sin that leads to death and destruction? If he was defeated, by Christ, why are we exhorted to put on the full armor of God as a shield against the enemy?

Why are we warned that we will engage in a struggle against the forces of evil? And exhorted to stand firm against the schemes of the devil (Ephesians 6:16)?

To understand this situation, we must go back to what we discussed in the previous classes. Within every man, woman and child born on earth is a sin nature. A nature, called flesh in the scriptures, that was corrupted by the devil in the fall of Adam and Eve. A nature, cut from a fabric of evil, that allows man to be controlled, influenced and subject to the desires of Satan. Thus, no man on his own can come to God, for his desires, whether he is conscious of it or not, are not subject to the Law or will of the Lord.

Whatever a man desires, the scriptures tell us, becomes his master. In other words, man is a slave to his evil desires, and therefore, a slave to sin and under control of the devil. And the soul that sins will perish under decree of God.

It is in this state of the world, the state of mankind, that the Lord Jesus, God come in the flesh, gave his life as a ransom to satisfy the justice of God. He received the judgment due you and I, and every redeemed child of God. But he did more than just take on the penalty of sin. God's so great salvation was so much more. In his burial and resurrection, the Lord took away the ability of the rulers and authorities in spiritual places to have dominion over God's people.

Once the death of Christ was accepted by God the Father, as satisfying His judgement against men, the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of God, (all terms used interchangeably in the Scriptures) was free to come into the repentant hearts of men and give them a new nature. A new spirit no longer controlled by the desires of the devil.

But there was more that happened as a result of God's so great salvation. The indwelling Spirit joined the redeemed man to Christ. A spiritual bond, a splicing together of the divine and human spirit happened. We were grafted together. The redeemed, called saints of Christ, or saints of God, came into Christ, literally. Our spirit flowed into him and His Spirit infused us with new life.

In the resurrection and ascension of our Lord to his throne at the right hand of God the Father, the spirits of the saints are within Christ. We have become one. The scriptures say we are seated with him, now, not later when we die, but today in heavenly places - which means in the spiritual realm. (Ephesians 2:6)

And His Spirit feeds the spirit in our earthly bodies. Giving us nourishment, knowledge, comfort, wisdom, faith and power.

This is a spiritual thing I want you to meditate on. We are one with Christ, we in Him and He in us. No one can separate this union of Christ and his flock. (John 10:28, Romans 8:35) And we will see why this is significant in a moment.

The battle of good vs. evil

It is at this point where the bondage to the devil, and the dominion of man's sin nature were broken. This is the victory spoken of by our Lord. When the Spirit of the Lord entered the redeemed of Christ, we became the adopted sons and daughters of God. He became our King. He placed on us his ring and declared us to be His people, under his authority and protection. We were in effect taken out of the dominion of Satan and placed into the Kingdom of God.

Satan's control over our desires was ended when the indwelling Spirit gave us a new heart and new desires to do the will of God. His power over death was ended when we received the life of Christ, which is life eternal. His power to harm us was ended when we became people of God, and the angels of the Lord encamped around us (Psalm 34:7, 91:11).

Yet Satan and his kingdom still stood. And the saints while on earth, are still physically in the devil's domain. (Revelation 2:13) We are told that the devil's kingdom will not be destroyed until the second coming of Christ and then the devil and his angels will be cast into the lake of fire. (Revelation 20)

And while the devil and his demons no longer have reign over God's people, this has not stopped them from launching arrows and attacks. The best analogy I can give you is what happened in the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt.

Freed from the dominion and slavery to Pharaoh, and enroute to the Promised Land, Pharaoh attempted a last attack against God's people. The victory from bondage was already won. Pharaoh had no claim on God's people. He could no longer control them and they no longer served him. He could no longer harm them, for the angel of the Lord was with them.

Exodus 14:13 "And Moses said to the people, "Fear not, stand firm, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will work for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall never see again. The LORD will fight for you, and you have only to be silent."

Nevertheless, Pharaoh pursued the Israelites to the Red Sea. He attacked them until the final destruction of his army.

It is in this context the Christian finds himself. Our Lord has won us victory over the enemy. We are not enslaved any longer to his evil desires and sin. The Spirit of Christ, in the believer, is our victor. He has overcome the enemy's control of death to give us eternal life. And he has given us a new nature with desires for righteousness that we should be pleasing in the sight of the Lord.

But he has also given us one more thing. He has given us the power to lift the staff of God, as Moses did, to vanquish the Egyptians at the Red Sea. For while we are here on earth, we are not in the Promised Land. We are in a pilgrimage. And the enemy will pursue us until his final destruction. Yet, if you are equipped with the knowledge and wisdom the Lord provides, the enemy can do you no harm.

However, we are not called just to protect ourselves, to be defensive. Not at all. We are called to go into battle, to go back into Egypt, to rescue more of God's people. There are brothers and sisters still in the clutch of the devil, still living in darkness. Those who have not entered into the victory of Christ. And thus, according to the measure of faith the Lord has given each of us, we are to do the works of Christ.

This is our required service to God Almighty. For the Lord, has declared us to be His priests. (Revelation 1:6) This is the purpose for every born again believer.

To proclaim good news to the people, to free the captives, to break yokes of bondage and to feed and care for the sheep of Christ. (Luke 4:18) This is warfare, for the enemy seeks to hold on to those he has enslaved. He will not give them up freely. And he will fire arrows against the soldiers of Christ.

But praise God, for He who is in you, the Christ God, is stronger than he who is in the world. And our weapons are not carnal. But spiritual and mighty. More on this later.

Wielding the staff of God – taking authority

So how does this work? How do we move into that stage of our Christian life where we have victory in the struggles against the kingdom of darkness? First, we must have no doubt about the world we live in. The Lord says all that is in the world is evil. There is nothing good about the nations, world systems, inventions of men, culture and society we live in.

The Lord commands us to not love the world or the things in the world. For all will pass away. Behind the systems, culture and society of men, is the devil and Babylon – an unseen world of wicked spirits that influence the desires, actions and thoughts of humans.

Society will try to dismiss and ridicule the notion of spirits and a spiritual realm that controls the world. They dismiss the idea that behind war, terrorism, murder and all manner of evil are dark forces persuading men to act on evil desires.

Society will dismiss the idea of a coming Day of Judgment. They regard the Christian as a fool. But the fool is the one who denies the Word of God, and he who hears the Word of God, yet does not do what God has commanded.

So, we must first take with utter seriousness the existence and power of the enemies of the Lord. You must learn the ways of the enemy, how he attacks and how to recognize when others are under the influence of his power. You must learn to recognize the pitfalls that can subject the saints to his destructive power. His methods have not changed in thousands of years. They are always the same.

Absolute certainty of your salvation

Next you must have absolute certainty of your salvation. The one who is not in Christ is at great danger against the devil and the powers of darkness. The power of Christ is not available to those who are Christian in name only, no matter how many years you have participated in church or religious activities.

Do you have the witness of the Spirit? Does your soul cry out for God? Do you love Him? Do you even know Him? Do you have a testimony - a witness as to how the Lord has delivered you from death to life? Without this absolute certainty, you will never experience the Biblical Christian life. Yet, worse, you are still under condemnation.

The religious man holds on to his life in this world. He puts faith in his religion. The man of God looks forward to the coming of Christ. He looks forward to the redeeming of his body when he will finally be with the Lord. Do you look forward to the coming of the Lord, to the losing of your life here on earth? Praise God by whom, and through whom all things are possible.

Faith

The person who wields the staff of God is full of faith. He knows the will of God, in the situation he finds himself, and he does not hesitate to act upon that knowing. You must be able to hear the voice of the Lord. The Lord does not leave the Christian in mystery. He will tell you and make it known what his will is, if you seek his voice and presence.

Christ desires to commune with you. To have a talk, as one who sits down to have tea with a good friend. Our Lord Jesus prayed constantly to God the Father. Much of his prayers, I believe, was not a

petition, an asking for something. It was a talk with the Lord, an opportunity to be in his presence, to be filled with his knowledge, guidance, refreshment, comfort and power. It is the Lord's pleasure to "sup" with His people. (Revelation 3:20)

Throughout the New Testament, the Apostle Paul tells us how he was guided by the Spirit and the angel of the Lord. The Christian life is not one of things imagined in our head, wishful thinking, or exertion of human effort and will. It is one of obedience to the Word of God. Do you hear his voice? Do you spend time with him, to hear his voice and know his will?

Faith is the persuasion of God, not wishful thinking or blind belief. In other words, the Lord will impart to each of us a knowing of his character, a knowing of his will, a knowing of His power, a knowing of His Word, and a knowing of His grace. Then we must act on this knowing. Those that have "little faith" fail to act on the knowing the Lord has given them. Those of great faith, have not hesitated to walk or act on the knowing the Lord has given them. They did not allow their eyes, the world, storms, fear, or the physical laws of nature to govern their response to the Word of God. This is another way of saying, the Christian walks by faith, not by sight. (2 Corinthians 5:7, 4:18)

Such faith enabled saints to perform the miraculous and to do the works of God.

Acknowledging the Lord in all your ways (the battle plan)

The person who wields the staff of God has surrendered his life to the Lord. He willingly desires to be a vessel for the Lord Jesus Christ. He desires and petitions God to use his eyes, hands, feet and speech to accomplish the works of Christ. He desires to do the will of God, to glorify the Lord, and bear much fruit for the Kingdom.

Examine your ways. Is there a sense of selfish gain in building your ministry? Do you desire the praise of men or power and wealth? Do you serve Christ out of obligation or duty because this is what a Christian is supposed to do? Do you serve God because of what He can do for you - in other words to receive a blessing?

If your motivations are not pure, the Lord will never allow you to wield His power. If your motivation does not come from faith, a faith imparted by God, this is sin. Confess it, and ask the Lord for forgiveness.

When we walk by faith, the Lord is free to give us His battle plan. He can now position us in the place and time of His choosing to carry out His work. We get the glorious opportunity to experience victories and witness the power of the Lord. Sometimes, we may not like where He tells us to go. Some of us he will put into prison to witness to a lost soul. Some of us he will place in hostile lands or areas of conflict where our lives may seem to be at risk. But praise the Lord, my God, my strength and rock. Praise him through whom all things work for good.

Love your enemies

The life's purpose of every believer is to bear fruit, much fruit, for the glory of the Lord. And it is with this principle in mind that the Lord commanded you to love your enemies. What does "loving your enemy" mean in practice? And why is loving your enemy key to taking authority over the devil?

Saul of Tarsus (who became the Apostle Paul) was an enemy of the Christians. He persecuted, imprisoned and sent them to death. (Acts 22:19) All in the name of God. The scriptures then tell us of one incident where Paul “heartily” approved the murder of the righteous Stephen. (Acts 22:20) A man full of faith, and the Holy Spirit who did signs and wonders. (Acts 6:5-8)

Yet Stephen, as he was being stoned to death, I believe looked at Paul, and cried out to the Lord. With his last breath, he asked the Lord to forgive Paul and the other attackers. (Acts 7:60)

Even though the scriptures do not say this, I believe it was here that the seed of guilt was placed in the mind of Paul. It was here that the prayer of righteous Stephen, an intercessory prayer, a petition that God show mercy on his enemies, made it legally possible in the court of Heaven for the Lord Jesus to intervene on the road to Damascus (Acts 22:6). Because up until that point, Saul of Tarsus was a condemned man, a man who killed God’s precious children. A man with no expectation but the full wrath of God.

The result of Stephen’s intercessory prayer, was the conversion of Saul of Tarsus into the Apostle Paul. The fruit born in the Apostle then produced an even greater harvest of souls to the glory of the Lord God.

The scriptures say we are to feed our enemies when they hunger and thirst. (Romans 12:20) And we are to pray for those who persecute us (Matthew 5:44). The Lord tells us not to gloat or be happy when our enemies fall. (Proverbs 24:17). The question is why?

The answer is, the one who is your enemy today, could be your brother or sister in Christ tomorrow. In other words, a precious child of God. Only the Lord knows the heart of men. Only the Lord is appointed to deliver justice. But we are appointed to proclaim the good news, to feed the hungry with the Word, to feed the thirsty with the well of life within us, and to break bondages by casting out evil. We are not appointed to judge, for in this we incur the anger of God against us. (Matthew 7:1)

In loving our enemy, we break through the darkness that clouds their spirit. It is a step in lifting the yoke of the devil on a poor soul. Dear friend, this is part of the battle plan of the Lord.

But even more so than that, loving your enemy speaks to the character of the Lord. He who is kind to the wicked and the righteous. Merciful, kind, long suffering and patient, desiring that no man should perish, but that all should come to a saving knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. As God is, so are we commanded to be. In loving our enemies, we give glory to the Lord, perpetuating his honor and fame.

Knowledge of the Word

Then the next step in preparing to wield the staff of God, is to know the Word. The scriptures tell us many believers are tossed around and made ineffective, or even injured, by false doctrines and preachers they follow. (Galatians 3:1, Ephesians 4:14, 2 Corinthians 11:3-4)

Therefore, knowledge of the Word will prevent you from committing errors which lead to ruin and inability to bear fruit for the Lord.

The Word of God is called the sword of the Spirit. (Ephesians 6:17) It is the weapon we use in battle against the enemy. A sword can both block attacks (defense) and repel the enemy by cutting through his armament and schemes (offense).

Our Lord Jesus used the Word to rebuke the devil. (Luke 4:8) The Apostles used the Word to edify and comfort the saints in times of uncertainty and trials. Wisdom, the Lord tells us, will keep us from the seduction of the tempter, and all manner of evil (Proverbs 2:12). Know this dear friend, a seduction or temptation is an attack from the enemy. A scheme to cause the saint to stumble. A ruse to prevent the bearing of fruit, and the ensuing glorification of God. Thus, the Word is both our armament and guiding light to living the Christian life.

Faith that moves mountains

"Truly I tell you," Jesus replied, "if you have faith and do not doubt, not only will you do what was done to the fig tree, but even if you say to this mountain, 'Be lifted up and thrown into the sea,' it will happen. (Matthew 21: 21)

In this verse the Lord gives us the key to wielding the staff of God, and the secret to the miraculous workings of Christ and the Apostles. It is the Lord that gives a person faith. Faith, as we have said, is a knowing that God imparts to the believer. And not only a knowing but the persuasion to act on that knowing. It is then up to the believer to do the thing God has told him to do, even if it seems impossible.

Let's look at some scriptures which illuminate this point. In Matthew 8:10, we read of the centurion (a captain in the Roman army) who the Lord marveled at his faith saying ""Truly I tell you, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith." In these verses the Lord offered to go to the home of the centurion to heal his servant who was ill. But the centurion tells the Lord not to go, but instead to speak a word and his servant would be healed.

How did the centurion know this? What gave him the courage and confidence to tell Christ to simply speak a word to heal his servant? Why did the Lord call this confidence "great faith?"

In Mark 5:28 we read of the woman, who had an illness for 12 years, who said to herself "If I touch even his garments, I will be made well." Then touching the Lord's garments, she was healed. Which led to the Lord telling her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease." (Mark 5:34)

What happened in this case and in the case of the centurion? The Lord gives us the answer in Matthew 16:15. "He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." And Jesus said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven."

Measures of faith

It is God that imparts this knowing in the believer. It is God the Father that gives faith to each believer, in different measures. And then it is up to the believer to act on this knowing. The centurion could have said, "Oh this is ridiculous, a man speaking a word and a miracle occurring." The woman could have said, "I will look silly, touching his garments." Abraham, called the father of our faith (Romans 4:12) did not say "If I put the knife to Isaac, he will die and I will suffer a great loss."

How strange it might have seemed to Joshua when the Lord told him to walk around the walls of Jericho and blow trumpets and then the walls would fall. (Joshua 6) But in obedience, without hesitation and in acting on this knowledge, the scriptures say the walls fell "by faith." (Hebrews 11:30).

In each case these believers acted on the knowing, the word, the command the Lord had already given them. And in acting, in following through, the power of the Lord was manifest, giving glory to God. There was no doubt or hesitation, they each followed through by doing what the Lord had put in their minds and hearts.

We must contrast this with believers who have wishful and hopeful thinking, about a circumstance, but received no word from God. They are “believing in God for a miracle” and any doubt is a sign of little faith. However, their “believing in God to act,” in a particular situation, is not based on faith, but on wishful thinking. And thus, they are often disappointed.

It was the Lord who told Moses to raise his staff to separate the Red Sea. (Exodus 14:16) It was the Lord who told Joshua he could ask for the sun and moon to suspend their orbit to give Israel enough daylight to pursue and defeat their enemies. (Joshua 10:13). It was the angel of God who told Paul what his mission would be and the events that were to unfold (Acts 27:23) in his voyage to Italy.

This is not a mystery dear friends, the Lord does not leave his people in darkness, who work according to His will. God’s purposes will be accomplished, not our purposes or desires, no matter how noble they may be. The Lord then gives each saint a measure of faith and power to accomplish his will. It is then up to the believer to act on, to follow through, and behold the power of the Lord.

The unprofitable servant

An example, where a person was given a measure of knowing but did not act on it, is given in the parable of the talents in Matthew 25:14. In this story a man was given the wisdom of knowing that Jehovah God is Lord. This wisdom is described as a talent, which was the money of the day, something valuable. Two servants were given a greater measure of wisdom than the last. Yet the treasure given the last was enough for him to act on, to do something with. The first two servants were fruitful. With the gift of wisdom given them, they produced a return for the Lord. They did something with the gift given them. And so, the Lord called them “faithful.” They acted on the knowing given them.

In this parable, the work the faithful servants did is described as trading or investing the money given them to gain a return for the master. In the context of the Gospel, we can say these servants produced fruit for God. (Luke 8:4)

The last servant, however, buried the talent (money) in the ground. He did nothing with the gift of wisdom given him. He is therefore called “unprofitable.” I believe this parable is another version of the parable of the sower. In that parable, many who heard the Word of God, and received it with joy, bore no fruit unto God. (Matthew 13:20) They were unprofitable. They never acted and persevered in the knowing the Lord gave them and, therefore, had dead faith (James 2:26). The unprofitable servant has a knowing imparted by the Lord but fails to act, or do something with what he has received.

Discerning the enemy

“But he turned and said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man.” (Matthew 16:23)

In this verse, the words coming from Peter’s mouth the Lord recognizes as being influenced by the devil. In our walk to advance the Kingdom of God, the enemy will do the same thing with those closest to us.

In my own experience, there have been situations where my wife has said things to me I knew were from the devil. "Hypocrite!" was one term used to discourage me. And then there were times when things were said with an aim to cause dissension in the household.

But praise the Lord, I was quick to discern the true source of the statements and quickly diffused them. Sometimes the response was to say nothing. And in quiet proclamation I would rebuke the enemy in the name of Christ. Other times it was to respond with affection, which totally disarmed my wife, and left the enemy with nothing to build on.

Sometimes, especially in churches, the enemy will work through people to cause dissension or to lead members astray. Statements will be made, which cause disruptions or group thinking contrary to the will of God. I have no formula to gain this discernment, except to say the closer you grow with the Lord, you will be able to discern the natural from the spiritual.

Another example I give is of my daughter. There was a time when we would have Bible study and the reading of the Word seemed to literally hurt her ears. She seemed to wince in pain at the Word. She would refuse to read or when she did read she spoke so quietly I could hardly hear her. It seemed, to me, that there was evil spirit working within her.

I brought the matter to the Lord in prayer. And as clear as day, the voice of the Lord came to me and told me to pray for her every day. Thus, every night I prayed over her, rebuking the wicked spirit that was afflicting her. And praise God, in time the spirit left her and she has embraced the Word with joy ever since.

There are other examples in *The Authority of the Believer* and the *Roaring Lion*, recommended reading for this class, where you will learn about physical ailments and mental afflictions that originated from wicked spirits.

Therefore, discernment of the enemy is a key attribute in gaining victory in this battle. What we can say, is the goal of the enemy, in whatever form he may take, is to prevent the man or woman of God from continuing in his work and bearing fruit for God. The enemy seeks to discourage us, create doubt in our minds or to create roadblocks. Many a preacher has been derailed by marital infidelity or the seduction of riches, or antagonistic members of the congregation.

Have discernment when things happen which can cause conflict, lusts, hindrances or doubt to creep into your work for the Lord. This is precisely why we are exhorted to put on the full armor of God.

The full armor of God

Ephesians 6:10-20

"Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore, take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm."

"Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. In

all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication.”

“To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.”

“The combat is not against human enemies, nor against our own corrupt nature only; we have to do with an enemy who has a thousand ways of beguiling unstable souls.” *Matthew Henry (Commentary – Ephesians 6:10-18)*

Let’s look at this most important Scripture as a guide in our battle to advance the Kingdom of God and to bear fruit and glory for the Lord Almighty.

Belt of truth

Supporting everything we do in the Christian life is the truth of Christ. There is God, and in Him there is no darkness. He who has created man in His image. There is the truth of who God says He is. The truth of who Jesus Christ says He is. The truth of the Gospel of God. The truth that man was created by God. The truth that we are but dust and our very breath is from the Spirit of God, in whom and through whom all life exists. The truth of the Word of God. In this there can be no doubt, no variance. For it is belief and faith in the truth which holds all together.

Thus, the enemy will seek to attack the truth. With false doctrines, false prophets and even attempt to seed doubt in your mind as to the character of God. The very same tactic used to deceive Eve, in the fall of man.

Fasten the belt of truth. Secure it to your waste. Buckle it. Know it in the very depths of your soul. For once the belt is fastened, we no longer think about it. It is there, secure, unmoving as we walk in our pilgrimage.

The breastplate of righteousness

When you were born again, by the Spirit of the Lord, the righteousness of Christ was imputed to you. God now sees you as clean, pure and just. Worthy to be called a son or daughter. Worthy to be called brother, sister and friend of our Lord Jesus Christ. But while we were born anew, and the sin nature no longer had dominion over us, it did not go away.

There is something you had to do. The Apostle Paul tells us we must mortify the deeds of our sin nature by the Spirit. (Romans 8:13) You must work out your salvation with fear and trembling (Philippians 2:12). What does this mean?

I believe this is what it means. When we were born again, we were but infants in Christ. His infusion of Spirit and truth flowed through us. Now we had to grow in faith, grow in knowledge, and grow into the character and strength of the Lord Jesus. The scriptures describe this process as sanctification, as conforming to the image of Christ Jesus.

Sanctification is accomplished by the Holy Spirit. We cannot grow into the image of Christ by any human effort, no matter how noble it may seem. Yet, the Spirit of God, He of the triune God, gave us a part to

play. We had to renew our minds. (Romans 12:2) Realize, understand that we are now spiritual people in earthly bodies. Our spirit is within Christ, now, seated at the right hand of God. We are sons and daughters of the Most High who is pleased to give us supernatural power to accomplish His will. We wear the ring of our Father God Almighty. Angels encamp about us, to minister and protect us. We are the Lord's jewels, precious in His eyes. And as the Lord our Father is holy, we are called to be holy.

In him there is no darkness, but righteousness, love, kindness, long suffering, patience, mercy, grace, justice, and a consuming fire. Therefore, with fear and trembling, we are to walk according to the ways of God. To strive to only do that which pleases Him. To not touch the unclean thing. To not love the world. To love our enemies. Things which are not natural to us. But here is the secret dear friend. Here is what faith is. As we step out of the boat, as did Peter in the storm, and purpose to walk towards the Lord Jesus, suddenly power will come upon you, to enable you to accomplish everything that Lord has purposed in you and in your life.

The breastplate of righteousness is that shield of purpose. That mindset of holiness, that identification with the Lord Jesus Christ. That reckoning, consideration, understanding and deep knowing that when he died, so did you, to sin and evil desires. When he was buried so were you, to the world. And when he was resurrected, so were you, as a new creature, a son of the Most High with authority over the powers of darkness. Born again, to bring honor, fame and glory to the Living God. A holy man of God, whose past crimes, sins and filth have been washed under the blood of the Lamb. Brother, sister, by God you have been made clean in the eyes of the Lord. Live like it, embrace it, bring honor, and glory to God your Lord and Savior.

Shoes for your feet

The shoes for your feet are described as the "readiness of the gospel of peace." Know this, oh man and woman of God, we are called to be a kingdom of priests, holy unto the Lord. And as priests, like our High Priest, Christ Jesus, we are to proclaim the good news. That there is a Day of Judgment coming, when all men will be judged. They will not be judged based on morality, or good deeds, or what they believed. They will be judged by the Law of God. And by the Law all men are condemned, for no one, not one is good. Not only is there no good man, but man by nature has become an enemy of God, a rebel. Unable and unwilling to do the will of God.

But there is good news. Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ became a propitiation, a sacrifice to satisfy the demands of God's justice against wicked men. Those who then repent and turn to the Lord, believing on the Lord Jesus and all that believing means, would receive mercy and grace.

Be prepared in all seasons, in all circumstances, through word or deed, to proclaim the good news. For the Lord has said "how beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news." (Romans 10:15)

Shield of faith

The scriptures tell us the attacks of the enemy can be quenched by the shield of faith. In other words, his arrows fall flat, never reaching their targets. We have discussed what it means to have faith. But here take heed of what the Apostle is saying.

The breastplate of righteousness protects the man of God against attacks on his mind, purpose, his right standing with God. But the shield, in the context of this scripture, is something we use in an offensive battle. Our shoes hold our feet as we go into enemy territory to proclaim the good news. And as we

advance against the enemy, he will fire arrows at us, to thwart the advance. Thus, with sword in hand, and shield held high we blunt all his attacks. But more than blunt attacks, the shield of faith has power.

The shield of faith is that which allows us to wield the power of God, the staff of Moses, to destroy strongholds, to exorcise evil spirits, to lift addictions, to dispel darkness and blindness in the minds of the lost. "Above all" the King James version says, take the shield of faith when you are wrestling against the enemy.

You cannot enter a battle on your own. You will be defeated. This is the Lord's battle. He must give us the time and place to engage the enemy. And in obedience to his orders, He will give us His power, a supernatural power, to accomplish His will. This is the faith. First a knowing of where and what the Lord has called us to do, and then, without hesitation moving forward, acting on that command. And without knowing how we will accomplish the mission, against all odds, walking into the battlefield we do what the Lord told us to do. It may seem strange, as did the commands given to Gideon (Judges 7) and Joshua (Joshua 6) in their battles against the enemies of God. But when we do what the Lord told us to do, suddenly we see the power of the Lord before our eyes. This is the shield of faith, that which is "above all," and key to defeating the enemy and accomplishing the will of God.

You must read the story of Tommy Titcombe, as an example of how the shield of faith works in real life. This story is in the book, *The Judgment Throne of Christ*, which is free to download on this website.

Helmet of salvation

Next, we are told to take the helmet of salvation. A helmet protects the head from injury. But in the ancient days, by one's helmet you could determine to what army they belonged. The helmet is the crown given to us by our Lord, when we were saved. We are God's people. Jehovah, Elohim, Yahweh, the great I Am, - all names given to our Lord. We are people of the only true God, the King of kings and Lord of lords.

Brothers and sisters wear your helmet with pride. You are not your own, but belong to God. A new person, with life eternal in Christ Jesus, Praise God. Nothing can separate you from the love of God. Nothing can snatch you from his so great salvation. "For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance as our way of life." (Ephesians 2:10)

Sword of the Spirit

Then, finally, we are told to take the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God. To understand this verse, we must reflect on the context of Ephesians chapter 6. While it is true that knowledge of the Scriptures is used to rebuke the devil, to discern spirits and to know God, I believe something additional is meant here.

The struggle against the kingdom of the devil occurs as the Christian does the work of Christ. In the mission field, we are dealing with people. In the church, we are dealing with people. Therefore, when we speak the Word of God, it becomes a weapon of the Spirit to convict people of sin.

In Hebrews 4:12 the scriptures state, "For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart."

When, in faith, you speak a word to a brother, host a Bible study, evangelize, preach, hand out a piece of Christian literature, give your testimony, send an email with scripture verses, or even gift a Bible, according to the leading of the Spirit, the Spirit can begin to work in the hearer. Using the Word, the Spirit convicts the sinner of sin, cutting to the soul. The Lord says his word is like a fire and a hammer which shatters rock (Jeremiah 23:29). He says in Isaiah 55:11, "So will My word be which goes forth from My mouth; It will not return to Me empty, Without accomplishing what I desire, And without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it."

When the Christian goes forward in battle, he proclaims Christ, and him crucified and risen. This proclamation is the sword of the Spirit, which when heard, enters the hearer, to accomplish the will of God.

Communion with God

"With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit..." (Ephesians 6:18)

The presentation of the full armor of God continues with the exhortation that the Christian must not only cloak himself, he must be in communion with the source of his strength. The Christian worker has no strength or power of his own. Never forget that.

Praying to the Lord, at all times, as did our Lord Jesus, ensures we are aligned with the will of God. Ensures we are infused with His strength. It refreshes us, emboldens us and assures us of victory. Then the Apostle reminds us that we must support and fend for one another in battle.

"...be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints, and pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in proclaiming it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak."

We not only pray to the Lord for strength and guidance for ourselves, but also for our brothers and sisters in Christ. We are members of one body, connected to the head, which is Christ Jesus.

Note what the Apostle requests. He requests prayer not for health or provision for their sake alone. He requests prayer so that he is enabled to complete his mission, the work the Lord God has ordained.

Dear friend, I want you to meditate on this. The Christian worries not for himself, or about what he will wear or eat. The Lord will provide. His paramount concern is to do the will of God. He lives to hear those most precious words, "Well done, my good and faithful servant."

Amen.

Summary

In summary, the keys to taking authority, to advancing the Kingdom of God, and defeating the enemy, are these:

- Purpose is to glorify the Lord
- The Cross
- The world
- Absolute certainty
- Acknowledging the Lord
- Love your enemies
- Knowledge of the Word
- Faithful
- Discernment
- The full armor of God

Be single-minded in knowing that the purpose of the Christian is to glorify the Lord by bearing fruit to his honor and glory. It is the Cross of Jesus Christ which gave us life, power and made us a kingdom of priests, holy and clean, ready to serve the Lord thy God. It is only by the Cross that we can defeat the enemies of God. The world, no matter how lovely it may seem at times, is evil. Dissension, anger, murder, politics, terrorism, war, prejudice, addictions, corporate greed, the filth in culture and society – behind it all are legions of wicked spirits, led by the devil, that persuade men to act on their evil desires. Thus, we are warned to love not the world.

To wield the staff of God, to have the power to defeat the enemies of God and advance His Kingdom, you must first have absolute certainty of your salvation, your standing before Almighty God. Then, we must grow to maturity, acknowledging the Lord in all our ways, so it is His will, not our will, that is done. A key to winning souls for the Lord, is fulfilling his command to love your enemies. However, without knowing the Word of God, we can wander aimlessly, become deceived, and fail to reap a harvest for our Lord.

Then we discussed the secret to wielding the power of God: faith. It must be the Lord which gives us faith to move mountains, to part seas and to perform the miraculous. And to each saint is given a different measure of faith, according to the work He has appointed you to complete.

As we grow in the Lord He will give us discernment to know the natural from the spiritual. While some challenges in life are due to the natural, many originate from the spiritual, the wiles of the devil. Knowing the root cause of a problem determines the solution. When an issue is of the enemy, your weapons are powerful; rebuke in the name of Christ, proclamation of the Gospel, intercessory prayer, the angels that encamp around thee, the Word, and the staff of God that can move mountains.

Finally, we must put on the full armor of God, every day of our Christian life. In closing, I encourage to read through the Teacher's Guide for this class. There is additional information on this topic which will be a blessing in your life; information that will assist you in reaping a harvest of souls and fruit for our Lord and Savior.