

True Spiritual Authority

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You might be surprised if you just sat back and watched how many false demonstrations of authority are being performed in the world today. I say “performed” because “performance” is often the form these activities take. Sometimes it’s the person performing—getting themselves and their audience all worked up so that the atmosphere seems somehow more mystical than it needs to be. Other times, we find demons performing—producing unnecessary manifestations of their grip on a person.

I’ve seen these things happen often, and to be frank, they’re just plain un-Christ-like. When Jesus cast out demons, He most typically did it with a single word—not shouting, jumping, spinning, punching, holy water, crucifixes, or anything else. Just a word. He rarely permitted the demons to speak, and if they did, He gave them no room to exercise anymore power over the person they were tormenting.

Jesus had authority. He didn’t need to get all riled up. He didn’t need to hypnotize the crowd. He simply said “Go,” or “Come out of him.” His methods were confident and focused. Jesus drew all His authority from His Father—not from His actions or manipulation of others’ psychology.

I tried for several years to “do the work of God” by exercising my own understanding of human psychology. I would make sure the music was just right, the lighting was just so, and that all distractions were minimized. I would use the false-authority techniques I had seen demonstrated by others. I would pray for a person with long, drawn-out tones and then suddenly shout or blow on the person. Then they would jump or fall over or shout back. All the while, I looked like some kind of super-minister. But it was all a lie. It was false authority—not Christ’s.

Then a couple years ago, I uncovered the reality of unity with Christ that I’ve recounted so often on my web site (www.SupernaturalTruth.com). We are to be partners with Christ in His death—putting our old selves to death and ceasing to live for ourselves and the things of this world. Then we are to be partners with Him in His resurrection—receiving new life from the Holy Spirit as He reveals to us our true identities in Christ. And finally, we are to be partners with Him in His ascension to the right hand of the Father in Heaven by entering into a relationship of intimacy with God. That’s where we have authority.

Unity with Christ

Partnership with Christ in His death and resurrection are necessary steps in the Christian life, but we cannot stop there.

I know so many Christians who are “stuck” at the cross. They keep seeing things in their lives that need to be put to death, and they ask forgiveness and make up their mind to live differently; then they fall right back into it. This cycle continues endlessly to the point of getting downright ridiculous. They are stuck at the cross.

I also know Christians who have figured out that death is not enough, and so they ask the Holy Spirit to give them new life. These folks are new creations—“born again” by God’s Spirit into the Kingdom of God. They have “resurrection life” and people can see the change in them. They’re what the world would deem “good people” who love God. These folks are often very active in their churches. But they are stuck at the resurrection.

As much as these two phases of Christianity are good and necessary, and as much as the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are active in our lives at each stage, the fact remains that people in these positions do not have unity with Christ.

Jesus is no longer dying on the cross. To be in this first stage is to be revealing Jesus “as He was.” And He is no longer walking out of the tomb; that was 2000 years ago as well. Rather, Jesus Christ is RIGHT NOW in Heaven, seated at the right hand of the Father. The Bible doesn’t tell us to live like Jesus DID—it tells us to be in unity with Him TODAY!

1 John 4:17b—...as He is, so are we in this world (NKJV).

You read that right: as Jesus IS, so are we in this world. Not as He was.

As He Is...

I want to take a few minutes to really focus in here on the nature of Jesus “as He is” so that we can put things into proper perspective. Read the following verses carefully. Let your heart be drawn into worship. Jesus deserves it all!

Revelation 1:10-18—*It was the Lord’s Day, and I was worshiping in the Spirit. Suddenly, I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet blast. It said, “Write in a book everything you see, and send it to the seven churches in the cities of Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea.”*

When I turned to see who was speaking to me, I saw seven gold lampstands. And standing in the middle of the lampstands was someone like the Son of Man. He was wearing a long robe with a gold sash across his chest. His head and his hair were white like wool, as white as snow. And his eyes were like flames of fire. His feet were like polished bronze refined in a furnace, and his voice thundered like mighty ocean waves. He held seven stars in his right hand, and a sharp two-edged sword came from his mouth. And his face was like the sun in all its brilliance.

When I saw him, I fell at his feet as if I were dead. But he laid his right hand on me and said, “Don’t be afraid! I am the First and the Last. I am the living one. I died, but look—I am alive forever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and the grave (NLT).

Ephesians 1:18-23—*I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every*

title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way (NIV).

Colossians 1:15-18—*He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy (NIV).*

Hebrews 1:1-4—*In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven. So he became as much superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is superior to theirs (NIV).*

If we are to say that “As He is, so are we in this world,” then THIS is the Christ with whom we have unity! Not the dying Christ. Not even the raising Christ. We are offered unity with the ascended Christ!

When Jesus was on the cross, He didn't have authority. Instead, He was stripped of all relationship with His Father. Jesus physically became sin, which is separation from God; and the Father turned His face from Him. Then Jesus rose from the dead, and He was markedly different. He still did some miraculous things, but he was not yet seated at the right hand of God. Instead, He walked the earth for forty days giving His disciples further direction and admonitions. But then, forty days after His resurrection, Jesus ascended into heaven and was seated at the right hand of God, far above all power and authority in heaven or on earth!

...So are We!

This is the mind-blowing part: Jesus Christ has invited us to participate in this place of authority and intimacy with the Father! Jesus said in Revelation 3:21, “To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne” (NIV).

We have a tendency to read this verse and assume that Jesus is talking about the distant future. We can accept that this will be true after we've died or after Jesus comes back. In reality, though, it is speaking of RIGHT NOW! We are invited to sit with Christ on His throne *right now!* Ephesians 2:6 shows that those who have been partners with Christ in His death and resurrection are also made partners with Him in His ascension!

Ephesians 2:1-7—As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath. But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. **And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus**, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus (NIV, emphasis added).

The Results of Christ's Ascension

In John 14:12, Jesus told His disciples, “Greater works than these you are going to do because I am going to My Father” (NIV). Those of us who have studied the reality of present-day miracles often quote the first part of that verse. But we have a tendency to ignore the second part. The key word is “because.” Jesus is saying that “The reason you will do greater works than Me is that I am going to ascend into Heaven to be with My Father.” In other words, the “greater works” Jesus promised are directly tied to His ascension into heaven.

Now, the question remains: What is it about Jesus ascending into Heaven that enables us to do greater works than Him?

When Jesus walked the earth, He did not do so as God. Philippians 2 says that when Jesus came to earth, He gave up everything about Himself that could be considered “God.” Everything Jesus did when He walked this earth was done as a regular man in right relationship with His Father in Heaven. But when He ascended into heaven, He became a man who was actually seated at the right hand of His Father—far above all power and authority in all of creation!

Now I have to be careful with this next statement, because it can be taken the wrong way. So please pay careful attention and don't just run with the first thing you read here.

When Jesus walked the earth, He was not equal with God the Father. But as we walk the earth, we can be equal with Christ.

Here's the Scripture to back that up. First, Philippians 2:6-8 says that Jesus did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but humbled Himself to the very nature of a servant. Jesus let go of His equality with God and did every miraculous work on earth as a human being who truly knew the Father despite His inequality with Him.

This is where we gain the advantage that enables us to do “greater works.” Jesus welcomes us to share in unity with Him AS HE IS! He says that we can sit down with Him on His throne. He says that if we've been raised with Him, we are also seated with Him! If we are partners with Christ in His ascension, then we are seated with Him in the heavenly realms. We the Church are His body in the earth. We're His ambassadors. “As He is, so are we in this world!”

It's amazing to think about—Jesus Christ is still our Lord, but He has invited us to share in His heavenly position at the right hand of God. And God has given Him the highest place above any other name that can be given.

We're His equals, but we're not His equivalents. He has authority by virtue of who He is; and we have authority by virtue of who He is. Everything comes from Christ. Take us out of the picture, and Jesus still has all the authority in the universe. Take Jesus out of the picture, and we have absolutely nothing.

That's why we're called Christians. We're people of Christ. We speak on His behalf. We act on His behalf. We represent Him as though He Himself were walking the earth. We've been welcomed into equality with Him.

But Jesus didn't have equality with God when He walked this earth. According to Paul, He gave that up. That's why we can do greater works than Him. Unlike Jesus who gave up His equality with the Father in order to walk this earth, we have a divine equal in Heaven! We have a nearness to the Father that has been procured for us by Jesus Himself—and it is a place of unsurpassed power and authority! We have the infinitely powerful backing of Jesus Christ!

He gives us the authority to speak on His behalf! When you say, "In Jesus' name," you are saying, "This is not my decree, it is Christ's!"

True Authority in Action

So, if we have equality with Christ through the Holy Spirit, and if Jesus prophesied that we would do greater works than He did on the earth, then we ought to have even more profound demonstrations of divine authority.

When I started embracing this concept and walking in unity with Christ, I started finding Christian ministry to be easier and easier. Here's how it has played out in a couple scenarios.

In one case, I was staffing a camp for children who had been abused and neglected. The first night is typically the most important because it is the basis for these kids' judgments of the entire camp and how it will go. But on the first night, we found ourselves hurrying the kids indoors as a monstrous storm loomed in the distance, stretching across the entire horizon as far as we could see in either direction.

But we had all been in prayer for this camp to be a success, and I had an intense feeling in my heart that this storm was not in line with God's will. I knew in my heart that it just wasn't right, so I grabbed my walkie-talkie and radioed the camp director: "Get the kids inside, but I'll be late. I'm going down to the campsite to pray."

As the ominous clouds billowed closer, I ran as fast as I could to the campfire site where we were supposed to have marshmallows and camp songs later that night. It was right at the edge of a pond, and I had a clear view of the storm from there.

But as I arrived at the camp site, I thought, "What now, God?" I felt totally helpless against this storm, but I knew anything was possible with His direction and authority. Out of the corner of my eye, I noticed a small rowboat turned upside-down on the shore of the pond. Now, I don't know if this was important or

not, but God knew it was just what I would need to ignite my faith. The thought occurred to me that Jesus calmed a storm while standing on a boat, so I would too!

With my eyes set firmly on the storm, I marched over to that boat, stepped up on top of it, and asked for the authority of Christ to move freely through me.

“You are not of God,” I said to the storm, “and you are not allowed to ruin this camp or scare these children. In Jesus name, I command you to come no further.”

At that instant, I saw with the eyes of my spirit as a massive angel—hundreds of feet tall—rose up from one of the distant corners of the camp on the other side of the pond. Two huge wings stretched out to either side, and with my physical eyes, I watched as the storm parted and started to flow around the camp.

Right away I radioed the director and said, “We’re going to have a camp fire tonight. The storm is going around us.” A few of the camp staff quickly looked out the window and also witnessed the miracle taking place.

Sure enough, by the time the children were coming out of the building, the storm was visible 360 degrees around the camp, but we had a perfectly clear, starlit sky above us. Thunder and lightning loomed in the distance, but we were all dry and safe. In fact, we found out the next day that there was flooding in the next city over.

Now this is not a story about my abilities or authority. I have nothing apart from Christ. And here’s the fun part: I had nothing that you don’t have! Any Christian at that camp could have worked the same miracle, but for some reason God chose me...maybe so I could write this example into this teaching. Who knows? I know He has a reason for everything.

Then at another time, I found myself in the parking lot of a local restaurant with a friend who was facing some serious trials in his life. God had been stirring his heart all evening. Now it was after midnight, and the Holy Spirit was prompting me that it was time to act. Through prayer, we uncovered that there was a demon oppressing him and holding him back from who God wanted him to be. And this time, without any fanfare, music, hypnosis, or fancy manipulation, I simply said, “On behalf of Jesus Christ, I command you to come out of him.”

Nothing seemed to happen. There was no shaking, no screaming, no rolling around, no vomiting...nothing.

“Did you see how easy that was?” I asked. Actually I have to confess I was kind of probing for some sort of response because it didn’t look like anything happened.

“Yeah,” he replied, “It was just like...” the young man took a deep breath and exhaled. He continued, “I just felt the weight lift, and I can finally think clearly for the first time in years.” He went on to explain the Gospel to me with excitement—as though trying to convert me—because it was the first time it had ever settled into his spirit. It was an instantaneous change and an exciting moment for both of us!

In one sentence, that young man who had been tormented by a demon for years was set totally free. From there we moved on to issues of repentance, forgiveness, and the infilling of the Holy Spirit. He left that night as a new person.

Embracing Authority

So here's how this all works. It's not about believing you have authority, even though that's helpful. It's not about feeling like you have authority, even though that's nice. It's not even about being confident in the authority you have, even though that has a measure of value. It's all about Christ. If you're in relationship with Him, you have all His authority. If you have no relationship with Him, you have nothing.

Philippians 2:5-11 gives us the "formula" for embracing our authority in Christ. It shows how Jesus received that authority and tells us that we should do the same!

Philippians 2:5-11—*Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (NIV).*

By the world's standards, it seems backwards. Even our church leaders often tell us that we can achieve greatness in God's Kingdom by believing the right things or claiming the right promises. And yet this verse instructs us not to consider equality with God something to be grasped.

I can assure you, this is the ONLY way to receive true authority from Jesus Christ because "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble" (James 4:6). If our focus is on the authority we will receive, the only thing we will be given by the Lord is rebuke. Consider the disciples in Luke 11:46-48 who started arguing about who would be the greatest in the kingdom of Heaven. Jesus knew what they were talking about and rebuked them by saying "He who is least among you will be the greatest."

But if our focus is on Jesus Christ and we seek to humble ourselves before Him, He will welcome us into His place of authority in the heavenly realms. We will be made partners in His ascension. We will have intimacy with our Father and will be able to speak with the authority of Christ!

True spiritual authority is not the result of our hard work, diligent study, or personal convictions. It is the result of Christ alone. It does not come from our effort or achievement. It is given by invitation only. The ascended life is directly tied to humility:

James 4:10—*Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up. (NIV).*