



Malvern Mashal Makon 61

Establishing and Enabling with Exousia Authority

When Jesus had called the Twelve together, He gave them *exousia*: power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases, and He sent them out to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick. (Luke 9:1-2, cf Matt. 10:1)

In all that He was, and in all that He did, Jesus demonstrated the authority that was uniquely His as the Son of God. No one ever taught as He did, let alone healed the humanly incurable, yet He left us with a challenge: to do the same and even more. The path to such authority is simple when we are in step with the Father's heart – but full of pitfalls when we are not. This is why we are going to examine the subject of spiritual authority over the next few publications, to understand what that authority does – and does not consist of.

Scripture teaches an amazing truth: that the Lord Jesus bestows on us the same *exousia* power and authority that was on His disciples (Acts 1:8; Luke 4:14, Acts 10:38). May the Lord make this more and more a living reality rather than just a theological concept!

Throughout the Gospels we see the Lord Jesus exercising His divine authority over everything that hindered the will of God. Even though certain “dead-from-the-head-down” Pharisees did their best to oppose Him, Jesus exercised authority equally over natural phenomena, such as storms, physical ailments, such as blindness and leprosy, and spiritual obstacles, such as the traps that the Scribes and Pharisees set for him.

Supremely, He declared that He had been given the authority to lay His life down and then to take it up again (John 10:18). Whatever it may have looked like to outsiders, His death was far from being that of a helpless victim, but was rather the crux of God's plan for saving the world. This in turn prepares the way for the consummation of the ages, when the times will have reached their fulfilment, and He brings all things in heaven and on earth together under one Head. (cf Eph 1:10).

Let's start with some Greek!

The word *dunamis* – often translated ‘might’ or ‘power’ – refers to the “dynamic dynamite” we need for meeting particular tasks and challenges and for establishing the Lord’s kingdom purposes. By contrast, *exousia*, the other main word used to describe God’s power in the New Testament, emphasises less sheer strength or specific ‘signs’ than jurisdiction, privilege, capacity, freedom, influence, force, and right.¹ It is this combination that enables us to exercise the authority that is rightfully ours in Christ. For those who would like to explore the theological background more, please see the detailed footnote below.²

At the ‘other end of the gospel’ stories, the Lord Jesus declares in Matthew 28:18 that *All authority [exousia - power] has been given to Me in heaven and earth.*

Praying with Authority

Psychologists tell us that the number one reason why many of us fail to realise our potential in life is through lack of courage and persistence rather than through a lack of skills or resources. If we apply this thought to the spiritual world, perhaps we can say that there come times when merely praying *about* situations may not be enough because there is a time to *speak* to the mountain (the problem or obstacle) and command it to be removed.

Because of our position in Christ, there are many things that He wants to establish and decree that will otherwise not come about. This is the privilege He has given us as His heirs and co-workers.

Smith Wigglesworth used to say that “an ounce of faith is worth a ton of asking.” He meant by that that there is a kind of asking which is birthed less in faith than in human concern and anxiety. True faith releases the Lord’s own authority into situations.

Sometimes we may feel led to act this authority out. Before we took possession of our house in Shetland, Guy Rothwell and I drove a stake into the ground as a sign that the Lord wanted us to possess the land. He promised that this house would have, as it were, “windows” into heaven. It did!³ There are many occasions when we need to pray ‘with authority’ rather than just praying ‘covering prayers’ about situations.

When it comes to stretching out the rod of authority and declaring the purposes of God, it is not the *length* of our prayers that matter, so much as the level of *desire* we put into them, the measure of *obedience* that I remember the time when I was about to set off on a weekend of ministry and pulled my back out very sharply. I was in such pain that it took me ages even to lower myself gingerly into bed. I think I would still be there now had not Ros been there to command the pain to go. It did – more or less instantly. Things happened that weekend which have proved of far reaching importance.

Moving in faith

Jesus challenges us to ‘have faith in God’ (Mark 11:22). I am told that this phrase can also be translated, ‘have the faith of God’. What could be more wonderful or more challenging? Again, it will pay us to return for a moment to basics.





The faith that is spoken of here, *pistis* in Greek, means “conviction, confidence, trust, belief, reliance, trustworthiness, and persuasion.” The way Jesus Himself urges us to exercise our faith is a profound reassurance that faith is not some trick of the mind but “an applied release of God’s creative word of promise” (5) – for the faith we have in our hearts needs to be expressed with our mouths to become active and effective.

At the opposite end of the spectrum from faith is doubt – which urges us to believe (yes, doubt too is a belief system!) that God either does not exist at all, or that He does not care about our situation. Doubt is thus a ready generator of fear, which brings inner torment: the very opposite of God’s peace. Fear keeps us from receiving all the good things that God desires to send our way – whereas godly expectancy opens our hearts to receive all that God has in mind for us.

Such faith is caught as well as taught

So many of the best truths and practices are “caught rather than taught”. You can probably think of ‘destiny’ moments in your life when God has brought key people across your path who were moving in the power of the Spirit and who challenged you into thinking and praying in completely new ways. We catch what is in their spirits and learn how to move in that anointing and authority ourselves.

When Ros first qualified as a midwife, a midwife called Annie inspired Ros to pray with women in labour. Ros learnt to do the same by watching her in action and sharing those times of prayer with her. The moral of the story is simple: never underestimate the power of learning from a godly example – and of being one yourself!

Faith or Presumption?

It is not always easy to know when we are moving in the authority of true faith, and when we are straying into wishful thinking and presumption. An image I have often used to address this issue is to imagine a printed sheet of paper. Real faith takes us to the top of the page; but ‘hyperfaith’ (which is when we stray into having faith in faith) is like trying to print in the unusable top margin of the page where nothing should be written.

Paul’s concern is that we should fall prey neither to unbelief and cowardice nor to the idealistic perfectionism of the super-spiritual. Those who fall into heresy usually do so by overstressing some aspect of the faith. Error is just that: an error, but heresy is often a *truth* that is pushed too far.

The overenthusiastic often do not perceive when they are going astray – not least because they may well be experiencing a sufficient ‘percentage’ of success in their ministry to vindicate their stance – in their own eyes at least. It also inclines them to lose interest, let alone compassion, for those who do not think as they do. Needless to say, it keeps them from the in-depth reflection and course reorientation that would be necessary to realign their hearts.

When I was translating passages of English into French at University, I learnt most from the bits I got wrong, and from the corrections that were squiggled over them in red ink. If we refuse to face up the harder things the Lord is showing us,

we are effectively sentencing ourselves to repeating the same old mistakes – endlessly!

One way or another, and usually with the best of intentions, many of us have fallen into the trap of making a doctrine out of an experience. We should by all means be encouraged by the ways God has worked and used us in the past, but we must also be open to the fact that He may want to do things a completely different way on this occasion. If we insist on doing things in the way that we know best, we may end up by missing out on God's best.

Our challenge, then, is to live the life of faith to the full without straying into unreality. As surely as we do well to shun some of the more outlandish beliefs and practices of the superspiritual, we must always be open to kernels of truth. I warned in *The Still Small Voice*,

“Those of us who are wary of the often exaggerated claims of the so-called ‘prosperity’ gospel may find ourselves veering too far in the opposite direction. There is nothing humble about *under* performing in order to avoid going over-the-top! ‘Playing safe’ risks living far below the level the Scriptures call us to.’

Where do you stand in relation to this?

It is time to do some self-evaluation! Where would you place yourself on the spectrum in this image of the printed page?

- Are you where you should be at ‘the top of the page,’ exercising a living, lively faith?
- Are you straying dangerously close to the top margin – or even going right off the page altogether!?
- Or are you holding back and so falling well below the top of the page?

If this is the case, as we shall be seeing in subsequent send outs, this almost certainly means that we have absorbed lies about ourselves – or about God – which are causing us to hold back from exercising the authority that is rightfully ours in Christ.

Be open to study your track record honestly – and to be realistic. If only a small percentage are being touched by your life, don't claim that more are being affected than is actually the case. Rather, ask the Lord (and others) what the discrepancy is pointing to. It is usually *not* sufficient to point to it all being just as the result of *your* lack of faith – or, alternatively, *their* lack of faith. There are usually “roots” behind our fears and exaggerations, perhaps because we are wanting something so much that it, rather than the Lord Jesus Himself, has become our goal. .

Use what you've got!

When Jesus looked up and saw a great crowd coming toward him, He said to Philip, "Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?" He asked this only to test him, for He already had in mind what He was going to do. (John 6:5-6)

You've heard the saying often enough, “Use it or lose it!” If we transfer this thought to the spiritual plane, we may not get everything right – I am certainly



very conscious as I write these articles on spiritual authority that I will not pitch everything quite right– but the wonderful truth is that the Lord takes the little that we offer and brings much good out of our efforts.

Lord, You have implanted You wonderful *exousia* and *dunamis* in my heart. I resolve with Your help not to look at things in the light of my own perspectives and unbelief. Fill me afresh with Your living Spirit, so that I can carry the authority of Jesus to a needy world. In Jesus' name, Amen.

¹ See <http://www.studydrive.org/lex/grk/view.cgi?number=1849>

² We read that at the beginning of John's gospel that

*He came to that which was His own, but His own did not receive him. Yet to all who received Him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the **right** to become children of God.*

Exousia, the word used here for right, implies both the privilege and the power that are ours by right when we are taken from the kingdom of Satan to become God's beloved children. It is this *exousia* that enables us to move in the *dunamis* of God.

Early in his letter to the Ephesians, Paul prays

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.

Paul emphasizes that we have been *called*. This is not just a once for all call but an ongoing one 'to His kingdom and His glory' (1 Thess. 2:12) backed up by the sure and comforting promise that 'The one who calls you is faithful, and He will do it. (1 Thess. 5:24). 1 Peter 1:3-9 has more to say about our godly inheritance. By making a comparison with gold, Peter turns to the most expressive and durable image that earthly language can provide. Even gold, however, is perishable when compared with the imperishable qualities that the Lord has put into our hearts as His children.

Paul is so eager to convey the enormous power of God that he describes it as being "incomparably great" – and yet available to us all. Using the richness of the Greek language to the full, Paul gathers together all the synonyms his God-inspired mind can come up with to describe the spiritual process. The power (*dynamis*) of God functions according to the operation (*energeia*) of the strength (*kratos*) of His might (*ischys*). *Dynamis* represents both capability and potential; *energeia* is effective operational power (3:7; 4:16); *kratos* is power that is exercised in resistance and control (6:10) whilst *ischys* describes bodily strength and muscular force. (6:10). Taken together, it is a wonderful pointer to the absolute sovereignty of God. There is nothing His power cannot do.

Having presented this 'thesaurus' of words in his bid to describe and define the divine power, Paul goes on to show that it was most significantly exerted (*energesen*) when the Father raised the Son from the dead and elevated Him to the place of ultimate authority, far above all rule (*arche*) and authority (*exousia*), power (*dynamis*) and dominion, (*kyriotetos*). He shows Christ as being the Head of the Church and in complete control of all ranks of angels and demons – for *God has 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.* (1:22-23)

I underlined the word 'for' because it is such a fascinating and wonderful thought that all things are subjected to Christ Him *for* (that is, 'on behalf of') His Bride: the Church. There are such riches to ponder here!

³ A few years ago, some pastors and intercessors from Hereford inscribed various Scriptures on stakes and drove them into the ground beside every road on the borders of the county.