

Spiritual Authority Submission To God

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Studio Session 16
01/2003

We've been speaking about spiritual authority and spiritual warfare as a joint subject. As a wrap to this whole series and as we reflect on it, the war that involves us is unrelenting because we have an enemy whose goals are the same as they've always been and who will become increasingly desperate as time runs out. In the book of **Revelation**, the **12th chapter**, it speaks of when the enemy is finally thrown into the earth that a realization will dawn on him that previously he could have known and chose not to know or he simply never knew, and that is that his time is short. And the Scriptures say that when he comes into the earth he will realize that his time is short and that will result in a display of fury heretofore entirely unknown, even for the enemy.

He will have established for himself a way of controlling all of humanity by capturing the entire way that the soul of a human being might think about his provision and his protection. In other words, he's going to have control of a global kingdom that controls every aspect of human life; such basic things as food supply, as security, transportation, communication, means of exchange... the whole bit. Because his intent is to use this as his final statement to refute God's claim that the thing that God has said about man, and that is that this creature, though made a little lower than the angels, has the capability—by being filled with the presence of God, filled with the very Spirit of God—has the capability of being transformed from a creature lower than the angels to a creature whose character is like the character of God.

Now, as this story unfolds *it will be imperative* for human beings who trust in God *to really trust in God* and it will be a very clear and uncomplicated vision of life in these times that will come upon the earth. You will either trust in God or you will turn back... you will turn back to the ways of the soul, seeking provision and protection by the means that the soul knows, which is to trust in what man could do and in what he's able to arrange, not only *for* himself and *by* himself, but get others to participate in as well, and this is the trap that will entrap everyone. This is the critical point. We have seen that God seems intent on working on the human being in this area. This is the battleground—the soul is the battleground—upon which this battle is to be waged and the thing that

God is doing now in this day of peace—now before these times that the Scripture spoke of come upon the earth—God is preparing His people by working on their souls.

The work of God in the soul is to bring us to utter dependence on God. To the human being, *that* seems like the ultimate sacrifice, to lay down our abilities to “do”, our abilities to think, our abilities to arrange and to trust in God altogether. The real strength of the human being is in this: anything that is distinctly and uniquely human, that marks us out individually and marks us out as a genus of being, called humans, is the soul. So the battleground is going to be for the soul; who controls the soul will control the outcome. To this end then, we’re finding even now in this day of peace that God is teaching the soul how to submit to the Spirit.

I want to go back to a reading that I read earlier, from **II Corinthians, chapter 12**, and I want to show you Paul’s struggle with just this very thing, or at least the clarity to which Paul had come on the point of the soul’s need to submit and it introduces one of those great paradoxes in Scripture, “**...when I am weak then I am strong.**” This isn’t just some sort of clever use of words, and it is by no means advocating this sort of non-violent response that has captured the imagination and the fancy of twentieth century man, and now twenty-first century man. It’s not that at all. It’s not about having a non-violent response because frankly, with non-violence, the person who responds to brutal, violent attacks by not being, himself, violent in his response gains a strategic advantage.

The question of whether or not that person’s point of view is actually the correct point of view or not, is never addressed. The simple fact that someone chooses to respond passively to violent confrontation gives that person an advantage in the eyes of third parties. So for passive resistance to work, it requires an international press and the pressure of the world looking in on you. If you were to take the press away... remove the television cameras, remove the newspaper reporters and so on, then non-violent response simply wouldn’t work because for it to work it depends upon a radical comparison, usually in the press, between a violent aggression and a non-violent response. There are even terms like “aggression” that are used in relationship to violence which would prejudice the discussion and ask the question whether or not that action should be taken.

So, for example, if you know that your enemy is seeking to destroy you and you preemptively act and their response is passive, if there is a press around, the one who is actually planning to destroy you gains the upper hand by simply not doing anything in the war of the press. So passive resistance can be... can be a most manipulative tool that actually works because it forbids any sort of discussion or inquiry into the position or the point of view of the one who does not respond aggressively in that—because the press presents the aggressor as violent, and therefore wrong—the non-violent person never has to explain his point of view because it never gets to that point. This is not... I repeat, this is not in any fashion, what the Scriptures refer to when they speak about weakness.

This is just human political maneuvering to gain an advantage.

What the Bible refers to as weakness, however, is something very different, and I'll frame it for us in **II Corinthians, chapter 12**. Here, Paul writing, says, **“ I must go on boasting. Although there is nothing to be gained, I will go on to visions and revelations from the Lord. I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven. Whether it was in the body or out of the body I do not know—God knows. And I know that this man—whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, but God knows—was caught up to paradise. He heard inexpressible things; things that man is not permitted to tell. I will boast about a man like that, but I will not boast about myself, except about my weaknesses.”** (now here he comes to the point) **“Even if I should choose to boast, I would not be a fool, because I would be speaking the truth. But I refrain, so no one will think more of me than is warranted by what I do or say. To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But he said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties.** (and now to the summary statement) **“For when I am weak, then I am strong.”** (Inserted – **II Corinthians 12:1-10**)

Now why is he advocating weakness as the doorway to strength? Well the answer lies in this one sentence, **“My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.”** Now this is the Lord speaking to Paul. Paul is a man of extraordinary strength, extraordinary intellectual strength. We see Paul as this fellow who gathers up the clothing of those who are stoning a man to death... they are stoning Stephen to death and Paul has orchestrated the whole thing and he is sitting back and he is holding the clothing of those who are stoning Stephen. Now, I will suggest to you that the toughest men are not always the “trigger men”, but the men who can sit back, pull the strings, and set events in motion with murderous fury.

As far as I know, for example, Adolph Hitler, I haven't read anywhere where he actually killed any person with his own hands. It is possible he did, but I don't know of any record of that happening. Yet *he* was the monster because he could sit back and give the orders to have it done. Or Joseph Stalin... or Pol Pot... or any one of the brutal dictators that the twentieth century gave to us. Perhaps not on the order of those monsters, Paul, however, in his early days was able to show the same kind of toughness. Paul speaks of himself in this way, “If any man thinks he might glory in the flesh, I have more.” And he detailed his substantial and impressive life before he came to Christ.

Now if anybody was strong in himself, I assure you that Paul was. Paul was a tough

character. Yet if Paul went up in battle against even a relatively low level demonic spirit, that demon would have every advantage that the invisible creation has over the natural creation and Paul would be no match for even a relatively smaller in power demon. In fact, a thorn in his flesh was arranged by the Lord, using a demonic spirit. When he says a “thorn in his flesh” it doesn’t mean that a demon lived in Paul. A “thorn in your flesh” is like having a splinter stuck in your finger—it is an irritant to you—it doesn’t really threaten your life, but every time you use that part of your body, every time you use that finger, in a sharp, stabbing way it reminds you of it.

God allowed this spirit to attach itself to Paul to teach Paul that he was dealing with an enemy that was far superior to him and that only by learning to trust the Lord was there any hope that Paul’s mission in life would be successful. As tough as Paul was, as resolute as he was, as strong in his mind as he was, yet, when it comes to the demonic, and in his case when it *came* to the demonic, he could not prevail very long against them. So God taught Paul the most valuable of lessons—the most valuable of lessons being this—that when you fight with the demonic, you must not go up in *your* power or in *your* authority. Seven sons of Sceva learned from demons who knew Paul and who had every incentive—every interest—in destroying Paul; the seven sons of Sceva learned the hard way how powerful demons could be. Why would these demons tear up the seven sons of Sceva, on the one hand, these same demons who knew Paul (“Jesus we know and Paul we know.”) (Inserted –actual verse—**“One day the evil spirit answered them, ‘Jesus I know, and I know about Paul, but who are you?’” – Acts 19:15**) why would they do that to them and basically leave Paul alone, when in practical fact, Paul did *far* more to injure the cause of Satan than the seven sons of Sceva ever thought of doing?

It was clear that they didn’t prefer Paul to the seven sons of Sceva, and so the answer is in this simple truth: that God taught Paul by making him weak, by letting him see how in his own strength he is nothing, letting him see that he needed to trust in the power and the presence of the Most High always and in everything... moment by moment. The most difficult task that God has in changing the human being is convincing the human to lay down his or her natural abilities in the soul. Because, you see, when we let go of our abilities to provide for ourselves and to protect ourselves—when we let go of those—what, actually do we have left? The truth of the matter is that *we don’t have anything else left. Then we must trust God.* The means within our hands of taking care of ourselves is the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life—the ability to identify what needs to be done, the ability to plan the doing of it, and the ability to execute it—and we are so obsessed with caring for ourselves that the enemy’s entrapment of our souls is all but a foregone conclusion unless the Lord rescued us out of it.

So the great lesson then that Paul was taught is that the important thing—the imperative—was to learn to instinctively trust the Lord; learn to hear the Lord, learn to respond to

what He is saying in the moment that He is saying it. When you do that as a believer, to the people around you—even to the religious people around you—you will look as if, to use a contemporary psychological term, you will look as if you are “in denial.”... that is that you see the problems and you are not “proactive”, taking things up by your own strength. There is no reward in contemporary society for those who trust God. If you would trust God today you are actually going *against* the tide. So what God has to do is to show you, to give you evidence—repetitively so—to convince you that although He is unseen and although His ways are not the natural ways of doing things and although it appears that by following the Lord you lose control, that in fact you are making absolutely the right decisions and you are doing the only right things that could be done and I’ll give you the example.

When you trust God it may be properly said that you have faith. What is faith? Hebrews describes faith in this way: it is the “substance of things hoped for and it is the evidence of things not seen.” Now look for a moment at the last of these descriptions because it really spells out pretty succinctly what it’s about. Faith is the substance of things hoped for and faith is the evidence of things not seen. (Inserted – **Hebrews 11:1**) What does this mean? I’ll give you this example: in a court of law, if you were to go to court on an issue—point of controversy—the judge and the jury, if there is a jury involved must have no prior knowledge of the events in question. When you get to court the job of the attorneys, whether yours or the other side’s, is to present such a quantum of evidence to the trier of fact and law (the jury and the judge) so that although they were not physically present observing the events or having personal first-hand knowledge, the body of evidence introduced would be sufficient to allow the trier of fact and/or law to conclude what exactly happened even though they were not present.

Evidence, therefore, serves the purpose of informing those who were not present of the exact nature of what, in fact, transpired so that they are able to form the appropriate judgments. Well the same thing is true of faith. God gives us, repetitively, the evidence that is necessary to convince us that although the things of God are not readily apparent to the rational mind yet they still very much exist and that quantum of evidence is so complete that the intent of God is that although you cannot see the unseen, although you cannot see and understand the ways of God just by observation, yet the evidence that you have of God’s consistent faithfulness to you ought to lead you to the inevitable conclusion: *though it’s not visible yet it’s very real*. So, when one begins to trust God then, he or she discovers that there is a life of faith to be lived.

Faith is not wishful thinking, faith is not a roll of the dice or your best and fondest hope. Instead, what faith is, is the conclusion—based upon the evidence that God supplies you—that although God is not visible to you and discernable to you through the natural senses yet not only is He real but everything He tells you is true. *This* is the point of evidence; *this* is the point of faith. This is meant to transform the human being from a condition of reliance upon the soul, which we might properly call self-reliance, to a

growing dependency and an ultimate *total* dependency upon God. This is the intent of the whole matter: to cause this transformation within the human being to take place.

Now, as this transition takes place God steps into the void and acts on your behalf in ways that you often do not see. In fact the common response is that you do not actually see what God does but the enemy, who sees and knows what God is doing, is terrified. So the Word then says, “This is how you deal with the devil. First, you submit to God—that means that you abandon your strength, your abilities, your competencies, everything that you can do—you submit to God. Secondly, you resist the devil; you declare what is true and he will flee from you.” (Inserted –actual verse—“**Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.**” – James 4:7) Now the reason he flees is not because somehow, magically, you’ve come up with the right formula. The reason he flees is that when you declare what God is saying, then God must act.

When you state what God is saying then it is incumbent upon God to show the truth that you have announced that He has told you. So if, for example, the truth that God gives you is, “**Man shall not live on bread alone.**” (Inserted – Matthew 4:3) And you declare that to be true, then what should be the outcome? The outcome should be that God should supply *for you*, but you could hear the soul saying, “If you don’t supply for yourself, you are going to go without.” No, you see God will test you. If money is a god to you then God will test you with money by actually allowing it to be removed so that you will no longer worship that god. But when God has worked that work in you and you are no longer a slave to that particular temptation then He will give it to you; He will supply you.

The only time God shrinks back that part of our resources that is needful for normal life is when we tend to rely on that rather than on God and we know we do that, typically, in the way we pray. Commonly our prayers to God are for these resources, “Oh God, give me a job. Oh God, give me money. Oh God, give me supply...and so on.” That’s typically how we ask God; when, in fact, if we will seek His Kingdom first and His righteousness first, then He will add the things that we need to us. So this whole process, then, of transitioning is one in which God wants us to know and to understand that when we no longer trust in ourselves then we are weak. When we no longer depend upon our souls then we are vulnerable; but weakness and vulnerability do not inevitably lead to our collapse because when we are weak, He is strong. When we will not assert our own defense then He will be our defense. When we are vulnerable—made so for His names sake—then He will stand for us. Therefore when you are weak, He is strong. This is the way to avail yourself of the power of God. I’m Sam Soleyn and we’ll be talking again soon. God bless you.

Scripture References:

Revelation 12:9-12

II Corinthians 12:10b

II Corinthians 12:1-10

Acts 19:15

Hebrews 11:1

James 4:7

Matthew 4:3