

WAR FOR ONE

Imagine being in a courtroom. You sit as the prosecuting attorney asks you one question after the next trying to find every angle to gain legal charge and find you guilty of a crime. Any crime. He pulls things from your history, as far back as your childhood and as recent as this very moment. He pulls things from your thought life, in your weakest moments. He demands 'isn't it true ...' you respond, yes, but I can explain. But 'isn't true'... he retorts. Sensing your tension, he makes more accusations picking at every mistake, every misjudgment, every wrong choice, trauma, hurt, until you cry out 'stop! yes, I am guilty, guilty, I give up. I will do as you say.'

He smugly says, I REST MY CASE (gavel slam).
It may seem over, but turn to your neighbor and say, 'it ain't over, until Jesus says so.'

Okay, so that might seem cheesy but it gives us a great idea of how the great accuser, satan, works. And how we often will get ensnared in his tricks of accusation, guilt, fear, and control until we release our God given authority to him. Authority? Yes, authority.

I know, authority has been getting a bad rap these days. Simply because it seems there are very few you can trust in those authoritative positions. Now, consider what if the lack of trust in authority is a part of satan's greater plan. See, if he can shake trust in authority at large, then he can shake trust in the one true authority, God. So, folks question the very validity of God. It's the oldest trick in the book.

Simply put, authority is license, jurisdiction, dominion which gives permission and allowance or authorization, in this case, over our lives. Satan wants it because he doesn't have it. At every turn he lurks seeking an opportunity to take your rights and the rights of others to lead you away from the one who will never leave or forsake you. God's authority in your life is a critical right. A right that is worth the fight.

These are spiritual legal rights given to each one who would call Jesus Christ their Savior and Lord. Spiritual legal rights are the order in which authority is given.

In week 1 p. Mike discussed how Adam and Eve were deceived by the serpent. in the beginning, we see God from a dark void creating and setting everything in place. He has authority and dominion over His entire creation. Upon creating Adam, he gives Adam the authority over the garden. God didn't give Adam the garden. God remained the owner. Adam is to help oversee it, to name the creatures, and care for it. It's like a building owner and his/her property manager. The property manager has authority to do just about anything to maintain the property but he/she cannot sell it or do major adjustments without the owner's permission. Adam is the property manager for God's building. So that at the point Adam and Eve are duped by the serpent, they surrender the keys, their legal authority over to the him. See, the enemy cannot steal or take authority. Legal authority must be willfully given or relinquished - often times through sin and disobedience. Adam had authority but at the point of his

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disobedience to God he surrendered it to the serpent. Oh, but he was tricked. He surrendered it. But the woman. He surrendered it.

The great thing, and there is a great thing. God still owned it.

That's good news with good implications. The first, is that God owned it then, and still owns it now. Which means everything has to come before Him, before anything major happens. The second, God creates the parameters for those who have been given authority. He created parameters for Adam and his creation. He creates parameters for the Prince of this world, Satan.

So let's review then, just watch how our God is so good ... God gives Adam the keys, Adam surrenders the keys to the prince of this world. God doesn't give up at that point and say, 'oh well, too bad'. That's the end of that. No, he continues to contend for His children throughout the entire Old Testament (he gives the law, he gives appropriation, he gives provision). But when we couldn't satisfy the law and maintain parameters, God took care of things once and for all, by sending His son to satisfy the law and get the keys back. Not just for Adam but for each one of us.

So that satan has no right over us - let me repeat that. Satan has no right over you. Tell your neighbor satan has no right over you. Unless ... we give it to him and we would do well not to do so but rather stand strong not on our own strength but on the Lord's authority. Consider, if he does acquire your authority he acquires strength over you and everyone under your covering. This is why it is particularly damaging when a professed believer who is a church leader, family leader, community or government leader, surrenders their spiritual authority to anyone but God.

Some may ask, but didn't Christ die for our sins so we are good on authority? Well, know that while Christ died once and took care of all sin, it is an ongoing battle because the enemy has not yet been eradicated and he is still here trying to win. His complete annihilation will come later. So, in the meanwhile, the enemy threat - no consideration is still present. I say consideration because he is not a threat. He has no jurisdiction on believers. So let's not give him more credit than he deserves. For it is not for us to fear but to stand strong because the Lord our God is with us and he has been at work freeing His people and re-building his kingdom in and through each one of us.

The Apostle Paul encourages us ...

"It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery." (Galatians 5:1).

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Paul is also warning to surrender to anyone but God is to place ourselves in bondage to the one we give our authority over to. Who are you giving authority to? Now youth, don't hear what I am not saying. This is not a pass to trash your folks. God has provided you parents for good reasons. Unless they are asking you to do ungodly things, they are your authority. That aside, are we giving authority to ungodly beliefs and behaviors potentially encouraged by friends, family, habits, traumas that hold us captive as the enemy enters in? How do you keep from surrendering our rights to the enemy? Well, the answer is perhaps easier said than done because it won't be on your own strength. It will need to be in partnership with God. The good news he is already there helping you but because of free will, He needs you to be an active partner. Passive is not an option.

So, the first thing to consider in maintaining your authority is: BE AWARE AND DILIGENT at all times.

From the get-go God is giving Moses a call to action; to lead His chosen people out of slavery and throughout the journey to the promise land. Moses is being asked not just to stand by but a call for obedience and with it receives a dispensation of authority as leader and prophet. That call of leadership we see is later passed from Moses to Joshua. In Joshua's commission, he is told by God not only lead but to stay close to the Lord in word and action. This, so that he will prosper and do well. Likewise, we are reminded to stay active and close to the Lord in what we do.

Remember; Satan's sole goal is to distract us from our true identity and divine purpose that we were made for. He wants to beat you down and wear you out until you are dissuaded from even having God as part of your life.

You can't sit back and just let things happen to you. Talk about just letting things happen to you. I must have been 10 or 11 years old when someone very dear came to me and said, 'eh, you dare me punch you in the nose?' I was shocked, but of course, my response was, 'sure, I dare you.' So, guess what happened? I got punched in the nose. How stupid is that? And yet, this is what we do at times as the enemy is setting us up. Ugh the situation is so bad. The proposition is horrible. Everything inside of you is saying it is wrong. And yet, what do we do? I going be okay. Shoots, I dare you. And we make decisions and choices that without realizing it we hand over to the enemy dominion. Not steal. We hand it over.

The only way we can get good at discerning his plan is to press into God with even more zeal. I'm not saying "do" more, I'm saying 'know him more'. So that we can make intentional decisions toward God and make sure to keep him in his proper place as the authority in our lives. But how do I know that I am doing that? Consider your investment of time, talent and tithe, where are they going? I had a very wise person say this. If you are having challenges with like say, playing games on your devices. If you spend more time on that than reading the Bible, then, you have a problem. Another good strategy to maintaining your authority is,

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2. Assess your fears, ask yourself "WHAT IS IT THAT I FEAR?"

After JOSHUA GETS THE WORD TO STAY CLOSE God CONTINUES...

"(verse 9) Have I not commanded you to be strong and courageous? Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged; for the LORD your GOD is with you wherever you go."

Ask yourself, Do I have any fears? What or who do I fear? Be honest.

Is it people? Is it the fear of losing it all? the fear of the Lord? And do I fear him in reverence? Or Do I fear him for other reasons? Is it fear that may come from judgement, shame, humiliation, pride? What is it?

It's been said, 'we will serve what we fear.' Think about it, if you fear not having enough, you will serve that need. Your thoughts, your behaviors will be consumed by that need. If you fear man, you will jump at every request, be disheartened. And, if anyone is unhappy with what you do, you will serve man. In other words, you give authority to whatever it is you fear and allow to wreak havoc in or control your life. See those fears will actually reprioritize your life so that they become your god. It's not long before we are plagued with worry, insecurity, dissatisfaction, anxiety and even depression. Why? Because there is no permanent peace found in anything but the great peacemaker himself (the one true God). So, rather than fearing anything else, fear the Lord, and let Him He prioritize your life, He will empower you to walk in your authority, and you will serve God in His peace. Just as He promised Joshua. If you're not sure what that looks like consider a self or group study through the 'Fear of the Lord' series. Having a healthy 'Fear of the Lord' is the best place to be.

Remember at the point we place anything but God (the one who owns it all) above us, we give the keys over and usurp our authority to the enemy. (whooo - that's right). And it can be so very subtle so it is important that we are not afraid but aware and diligent. It is Peter who reminds us to;

(1 Peter 5:8 nkjv), 'be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.'

3. lastly, strive to be unified - with God and with each other

While we have been discussing this throughout the year, it is critical we mention it here. The quickest way to lose authority is ungodly division, unhealthy competition, resentment, unforgiveness, avarice. All of these will allow for the enemy to gain ground against us because they pull us out of the spirit and into the flesh. They put us smack dab in the world.

1 John 5:19 says

"We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one."

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We must remain above the 'sway' so that no matter how justified you might feel, it is not God honoring to sit in the midst of division. No matter how badly they may have treated you, focus on what God would have you do. No matter how un-loveable or deceptive they may be, go with God lest the enemy take full advantage of the situation.

Joshua understood this so when the attacks came he stood strong. What was awesome about Joshua is he understood it was not about him. That it was all about the Lord.

So let us go as Joshua, confident in our authority in Christ, and be strong and of good courage for the glory of our Lord. The coming times may prove to be more difficult but take heart for we know our Lord has overcome the world.

Discussion Questions:

1. What does it mean to fight for your rights? What rights do you have as a believer in Christ?
2. What does 'authority' mean to you? What authority as a Christian do you have? How do you feel about it? Consider areas in your life you may be striving for authority, given your authority elsewhere, or are walking in your authority?
3. How does fear affect our authority? What does the statement, 'We will serve what we fear' mean?
4. What role does unity have in maintaining one's authority?
5. What is the sway of the world? How do you resist the sway?