

## Spiritual Authority God's Transforming Work

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We have been speaking about spiritual authority within the context of spiritual warfare. Now the importance of *this* is, of course, to provide the appropriate context in which to view something as important as the war in which the believer is involved. The general idea behind the church movement, the church culture, is to try to appeal to what people *want*, rather than what is true. In other words, what they want to do is to say to people, “If you’ll receive this message of Jesus Christ and will accept it, you’ll be saved and then we’ll show you how to go and win others so that others can be saved. And you keep doing this until you die and when you *do*, God will be very pleased with you. When you do, you’ll have a crown.” Well, salvation—of anyone—of course results from that person coming into contact with the message of the truth. But the purpose of the believer in this world (and the context in which the believer lives, once he becomes a believer) the purpose is not merely to evangelize people—*that’s more byproduct* of a life in Christ. And the way that the believer *lives* in the world is not to constantly try to find the place of peace and to constantly try to find the place where their life is unruffled by the circumstances that tend to ruffle the lives of other people.

No, *you are born into an environment of war*, one of conflict in which the enemy has some substantial advantages over you. For one, the human is a lower order of creation. Now, when one is born again, the Spirit of God is given to this lower order of creation and the Spirit of God does His work and that work is the work of *transforming* this lower order into a higher order, indeed into an order that is like God, Himself. Now, this is the great thing, and we’ve been pursuing this concept throughout many discussions. One of the things that I said, at an earlier time, in relationship to this very issue is that the war between the believer and the evil one is a war in which the objective is for God to use the believer to show to the opposition, to the enemy, what God has accomplished when He raised Jesus from the dead. And what God accomplished when He raised Jesus from the dead is that He overcame the enemy and He provided *a context* in which to receive all those whom He saves. This context is called the Body of Christ and when we are received into the Body of Christ, this is the context in which the transformation of our nature is meant to continue until the final result is that we look like Christ.

We have the same mind, we have the same attitude, we have the same objective, we have the same perspectives because we are the body and He is the head. This transformation shows that God accomplished the very thing that Satan said God couldn't, and that is to choose the inferior creature—to involve this inferior creature in the person of Christ, Himself—resulting in a transformation of the sinful nature into a partaker of and a participant within the Divine nature. Now, the enemy has a window of opportunity in his struggle with the human being to keep this from happening and that window of opportunity has to do with the human soul. The human soul is the true venue, the true platform, if you prefer, upon which *choice* is made. For a human being to be *transformed* from a lower order of creation into a partaker of the divine nature of God—for that to happen—he must be able to choose and the thing that he is *made* to be able to choose is to choose to love God.

When one chooses to love God one also chooses to deny oneself. It's really the corollary; in fact it's like the other side of a coin, choosing to love God. If you choose to love God *you will* deny yourself. Jesus says, "If you will follow me you must first deny yourself—*first* deny yourself—take up your cross and follow." The soul is that issue of choice, it's the platform of choice that exists within the human being and the soul is the basis on which the human makes a choice *not* to serve God. When the human chooses to serve God, it's a choice that he makes because his spirit understands what this choice is and his spirit exercises his choice and his soul agrees. If the soul does not agree, the choice does not vest in the human being, so the soul is always *that* place where this great choice is meant to be accomplished.

With that being so, the enemy has certain distinct advantages relative to the matter of choice. The advantage that the enemy has is this: that he is able to induce the human being to rely upon the abilities of the human to do and to accomplish the things that appear "good" to the human being. There are two things that humans are preoccupied with: one is his provision and the other is with his protection. The moment Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden the next thing that we see that they are occupied with is clothing themselves and hiding themselves—provision and protection. And the soul becomes so addicted to its well being; pursued through these channels—these objectives of provision and protection—become so addicted to the pursuit of those that that addiction is referred to as a lust.

A lust is simply that which sets aside all other considerations because *it* is the priority; everything else is subservient to it, and there are three lusts that the human being has: one is the lust of his eyes, the other is the lust of his flesh and the third is the pride of life. With these three lusts, the human unrelentingly pursues his provision and his protection, because that's the preoccupation of the soul. Satan has crafted something called "the world" which contains the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye and the pride of life. The reference for this, we've brought up before, is from the book **of I John, chapter 2, verse 14** and following, where it speaks of the world and what's contained in

the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes—the boasting about what he has and what he does.

So, Satan has created an entrapment for the human soul that is a perfect mirror for what draws the human soul. In the creation of Satan, which is called *the world*, which is a series of systems meant to induce the reliance of the believer, in lieu of trusting in God and relying on the Lord. Here is what is contained in the world—I referred to this earlier, it is **I John, chapter 2, verse 15, “Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.”** So, in other words, if your soul is pursuing provision and protection you cannot, at the same time, fellowship with God, because *God promises* provision and protection but the soul says, “No, it’s up to me... it’s up to me.” And so the world contains the promise of provision and protection. Here is what’s in the world: **“For everything in the world—the cravings of sinful man, (if you like, the *lust* of his flesh) the lust (it actually uses the word, lust) of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does—(that is, of course, the pride of life) comes not from the Father but from the world.”** (Inserted – **I John 2:16**) So, the soul is *drawn* to the world because the world appeals to the way that the soul seeks to provide for itself and to protect itself.

That appeal is through the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye and the pride of life. I’m being somewhat redundant here because I want to, in a sense, cut a groove in your thinking because *this is a trap... it’s a scheme meant to take full advantage of the way the human being naturally is when he operates by the lust, by the impulses of the soul.* This represents Satan’s greatest beachhead in his fight *with* the human. When he appeals to the soul, he has an opportunity. It is, therefore, no small wonder that we would see that the soul becomes problematic in this battle for the mastery of the human mind, of the human being.

*How then does the human being overcome the pull of the soul?* The answer is in two parts, there are two answers to this; they are cumulative—it’s not one *or* the other, *it’s both*. One is by suffering and the other is by having someone watch over your soul. Suffering puts at risk the human’s ability to provide for himself and to protect himself; suffering puts those abilities at risk. You only suffer if you can’t provide for yourself or protect yourself. That, in fact, is the definition of human suffering—the lack of provision, the lack of protection—in the full range of what is implied by that. Now when the human being puts his trust in God, God begins to be his provision and his protection. Suffering disabuses us of the notion of our own abilities to supremely provide and to supremely protect ourselves. Suffering is the breakpoint, but no one can live in an environment of suffering; you would despair. “I would have despaired unless I’d believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living,” the Psalmist said. (Inserted – actual verse—**“I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.” – Psalm 27:13**) And Peter says, “After you’ve suffered a little while the god of peace will guard your heart.” (Inserted – actual verse

—“**And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast.**” – I Peter 5:10) And Peter says, “He who has suffered in the flesh ceases from sin.” (Inserted – actual verse—“**Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude, because he who has suffered in his body is done with sin.**” – I Peter 4:1)

The second, and more regular fashion of dealing with the soul is that of oversight... that the soul be watched over. So, with respect to that, the Hebrew letter has this to say, from **Hebrews 13:17**, it says, “**Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you**” (King James says, ‘for they watch over your soul’) “**as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you.**” And earlier on, in Hebrews, this also is said, in respect to watching over, it says, beginning in **chapter 13, verse 1**, “**Keep on loving each other as brothers. Do not forget to entertain strangers... Remember one another...etc.**” But then he comes all the way through to **Hebrews 13:7 and 17** and says, “**Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever. Do not be carried away by all kinds of strange teachings. It is good for our hearts to be strengthened by grace, not by ceremonial foods...**” (Inserted – **Hebrews 13:7-9a**)

So, twice in this very limited reading he focuses attention on the leaders who teach us. Well, one might ask, “What does this mean—to obey your leaders?” The answer is that God assigns someone to watch over our souls. I have a more expansive teaching on this entitled, “The Sons of God” and I go back in the Old Testament and I show that the earliest priesthood that existed was called the Sons of God and the point was that there were always those who modeled the character of godliness to people around them. These were the ones, for example, of whose number Enoch was.

When Abraham met Melchizedek, Melchizedek was a priest of God, Most High and he served Abraham bread and wine. Abraham gave him the tithe because the tithe was the Lord’s portion. When Jacob made a bargain with God, as it were, in the **28<sup>th</sup> chapter of Genesis**, the very end of the chapter, he promised to give the tithe. (Inserted – actual verse—“**Then Jacob made a vow, saying, ‘If God will be with me and will watch over me on this journey I am taking and will give me food to eat and clothes to wear so that I return safely to my father’s house, then the Lord will be my God and this stone that I have set up as a pillar will be God’s house, and of all that you give me I will give you a tenth.’**” – **Genesis 28:20-22**) Well obviously there was no temple in those days, no order of the Levitical priesthood in those days, so *to whom* did Jacob intend to give the tithe when he promised the Lord that he would give a tenth? The answer was that there was an ongoing priesthood who served the heirs. And, again, this is not an attempt to teach that teaching... it’s merely a reference to it.

The continuation of that royal priesthood is that in the Body of Christ, the greater ones are meant to serve the lesser ones and this is what is said in the book of **Hebrews**, earlier on about that. Referencing Abraham and Melchizedek, the following is said, in **Hebrews 7**. It says, after describing Abraham and describing Melchizedek and the greatness of Melchizedek, it says this, **“Just think how great he was: Even the patriarch Abraham gave him a tenth of the plunder! Now the law requires the descendants of Levi who become priests to collect a tenth from the people—that is, their brothers—even though their brothers are descended from Abraham. This man, however, (meaning Melchizedek) did not trace his descent from Levi, yet he collected a tenth from Abraham and blessed him who had the promises. (Now here is the key) And without doubt the lesser person is blessed by the greater. In the one case, the tenth is collected by men who die; but in the other case, by him who is declared to be living. One might even say that Levi, who collects the tenth, paid the tenth through Abraham, because when Melchizedek met Abraham, Levi was still in the body of his ancestor.”** (Inserted – **Hebrews 7:4-10**)

Now this point is very simple; *it's not about the tithe*. The tithe is the Lord's portion. Much is said in the New Testament about the tithe, so whoever says that the Old Testament has one reference about the tithe, and it's an obscure reference either is uninformed about the tithe throughout the Scriptures or is simply not willing to turn loose of money. *But this is not about money; this is about watching over your soul—something vastly more important than money*. Watching over the soul is that which keeps the person from being drawn into the kingdom of Satan, the Kosmos, the world if you like, which has in it all of these three lusts which are specifically crafted to appeal to the believer, to cause the believer to act by his soul, and therefore, *to neutralize him* in relationship to walking in the spirit and living out the destiny for which God made him. So, watching over the soul then is... you know the amazing thing to me about this is that because people have been so uninformed about the things of God, freedom and money become the pillars of how we think about our relationship to God—namely that I'm free to do whatever I want to and I can rely on money.

Now the answer to all of this is that God intends to discipline the soul and one of the ways that He does is by suffering, as we have already mentioned, *but the other way—and the more instructive way*—is to have someone who is older and more mature in the Lord to watch over you. What do we think that it means when it says that the greatest among you is a servant? Ordinarily, what we think that means, for Heaven's sake, is that we think that the guy that does the janitorial work at the church is the greatest guy. What utter rubbish. The greatest among us are the ones who are *spiritually mature*, who understand the things of the Lord—not the ones who are capable of simply doing menial tasks. Ask the guy who does the janitorial work—if he had a choice between doing that and brain surgery—whether or not that's what he would do. We allow ourselves to be sucked into these nostalgic notions in lieu of the truth. No, it's not about the guy who

does the menial tasks. If he can do something else, would he do the menial tasks? It doesn't make him that... *it's the guy who is the lord*, who will take his robe off and will tie a towel around his waist and will wash the feet of his servants, all right?

You must *first* be great before what you do in service *is* great. If all you are capable of is doing the janitorial work, that doesn't make you great or not great. It's like... if you're poor how does that make you humble? That has nothing to do with it, that's just your circumstance. It's *who you are* that determines the value of these circumstances. So, if you are *first the lord*, and *then* you will tie the towel around your waist and wash the feet of your disciples... *then you are great*. But if you hire some guy, for minimum wage, to wash the feet of some other people *that* doesn't make him great just because he's washing the feet of people. Do you understand the point? And yet religion requires you to set all of this aside and say, "Well, you know, if you are really great you'll wash the feet of other people." No. You could hire somebody to do that, and pay him enough and he will. This silly notion is one in which we see the implications of this and it is just a religious idea. There is no self-respecting evangelical who can afford to be without a mission to Haiti... for the same reason. It is rubbish, it is foolishness... it is an attempt to create *an illusion* about something in substitution for what is actually true. *Begin* with the guy who is the lord, who has the *position* of greatness and then let him do the work of serving the least and you have the authentic example.

So in the Kingdom, when it says that the greatest is your servant it's because he *begins* with the position of maturity, begins with the position of superiority, as Jesus *did*...and then setting that aside—to serve—that's the idea. Now, we know who are great in the Kingdom by those who bear the weight of responsibility for the least. If you take the least and you tie a towel around their waist and have them wash... that's acceptable, that's the norm; the least should do that. But if you take the great and let him tie a towel around his own waist and wash the feet then you're *seeing* what Jesus is saying. So having someone to watch over your soul is not to have one of your buddies do the work for you. If you swim around in the same fetid pool of shared ignorance you are not any better for the result. Take someone who is well capable of leading, and let *that one* lead by serving; then you have the authentic example. So, we can't all be greatest. The greatest are the ones who *have* maturity in Christ, who will leave aside their own interests and will come and serve you and God puts that, both as an example of how God serves us *and* as an example of the need for the soul to be watched over. And *everyone* needs the soul watched over because it is the disciplining of the soul that makes us able to resist the temptations of the enemy, to be drawn in by our lusts to provide for ourselves and to protect ourselves.

I want to develop the watching over the soul in further detail by actually looking at the example of Christ, Himself. And I want to—as I conclude this particular broadcast—I want to say this: *that you never come to the place where you don't need someone to watch over your soul*, and I'll show that to you in the example of Jesus in another

broadcast. The reason is that the trials that you go through change, when you get older. When you are young, you do need someone to watch over your soul, primarily to guard you in respect to the obvious sins of the flesh, so to speak. When you get older the temptations are more subtle and you yet need someone to guard you then. Now, we'll pursue and develop this matter in much greater detail subsequently. But I wanted to leave you with that solid, uncompromising declaration. How do you know who is to watch over your soul? The answer is: ask the Lord and He will show you. When He does, usually what you will see is that somebody has cared for you—someone who is mature in the Lord—has cared for you for a long time, and we'll put more flesh on these bones in a subsequent discussion. I'm glad that you joined me for these discussions on the Kingdom of God and on spiritual authority. Continue to do so as we learn together. I'll see you then.

### **Scripture References:**

I John 2:15,16

Psalm 27:13

I Peter 5:10

I Peter 4:1

Hebrews 13:7-9a

Genesis 28:20-22

Hebrews 7:4-10