

***The Authority of the Believer: Exercising Our Dominion in Christ,
Part 1***

Please refer to the teaching notes for this message.

MANKIND’S DOMINION

Father, we come to You in the name of Jesus. And we ask You for the spirit of wisdom and revelation. Father, we ask You for living understanding as to who we are before You, and how we work together with You, in the name of Jesus. Amen.

Well, I want to talk about the authority that every believer receives in Jesus. We do not earn it. We receive that authority automatically the day that we are born again. The reason the Lord gives it to us is because He has called us together to exercise dominion during our spheres of life on the earth.

Let’s look at Genesis 1. In verse 26–28 is the first statement that God speaks to Adam and Eve, when they are there together. He gives them this remarkable declaration. This declaration affects our life even today. He says in verse 26, “Let Us make man in Our own image.” We see the Trinity here, as God in the plural is talking. “Let Us make man in Our own image, according to Our likeness. And let them have dominion over all the earth” (v. 26, paraphrased). That is the declaration God spoke over Adam and Eve: that the human race was to have dominion. They were to participate in the governing of the earth under God’s authority. The Lord wanted to invite them into partnership with what happens upon the earth, and what they did would actually affect the earth in a very dynamic way.

This is the mandate God gave the human race, to have dominion over the earth, and this mandate is an eternal mandate. It is not something that just happens until Jesus returns. Even in the millennial kingdom, and in the eternal age afterwards, God gives the dominion over the earth to humans, and He will continue to govern the earth in partnership with and through human beings. A remarkable declaration.

It says in verse 28, “God said to them . . .” The “them” is Adam and Eve. Again, it is the first statement in the scripture from God, speaking to them. He gives them the mandate and the directives of what they are to do in their lives. And, of course, He is speaking to all of their offspring after them: “Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it.” In other words, set it in order and bring it under God’s leadership; have dominion over everything that moves upon the earth.

THE MEANING OF THE MANDATE

Now, the mandate to have dominion means, “bring the earth and all that is related to it to its full potential” (verse 28, paraphrased). When God created the heavens and the earth, He put so many things in place, but only under the leadership of human beings could all these things be brought to their full potential. Even now, the human race is inventing and putting things together in the realm of technology. All of these elements were always present, but as God gives us creative wisdom, different dimensions of the created order come together in combination and even greater potential is realized. Now, that potential is going to continue throughout the millennium, and even into the age to come, when we will be exercising dominion under God’s leadership.

When He gave us the dominion mandate, He was actually inviting the human race into governmental leadership. Though God continues in His role as leader over all, He manifests His leadership with our active participation. We are actually decision-makers. Now, the reason the Lord did this—that He gave the earthly

realm to the human race—was not because He felt overworked. It was not like, “I will take the heavenly realm, and you guys take the earthly realm. Give Me a break. It is really rough.” No, that is not what He is doing. Rather, it is a relational commitment. He did not need humans to take that role, but He wanted humans to do so. Now the Lord, by that mandate, is actually limited in the way that He intervenes upon the earth. He set Himself boundaries by His own wisdom, and by His sovereign decree that He would work through humans. When human beings agree with Him, then He releases more of His goodness. But, when human beings agree with darkness, then darkness increases. Even though the Lord breaks in at times and manifests His leadership, the decisions of human beings, whether for positive or negative results, have a huge impact on the earth.

OUR SPHERES OF INFLUENCE

That mandate began back in the Garden of Eden, in the creation of Adam and Eve. And that mandate will continue forever. Let’s look at Psalms. 115:16, “The heavens are the Lord’s, but the earth realm He has given to the children of men” (paraphrased). He is talking about human beings. God has the jurisdiction over the heavenly realm, the angelic realm, the New Jerusalem. The Lord says, “I will give. I will direct that. I will give leadership to that in a direct way. But for the earth realm, the government of the earth, I am going to work through people when I break in and release My power. I will do it in cooperation and with the agreement of human beings”—to the measure they agree with a sphere of responsibility, a sphere of government, so to speak. We have been entrusted with a certain impact and influence. It may be over one or two people. It may be over ten or twenty. It may be over thousands or millions. And in as much as we agree with God, then God’s goodness is released through and into that sphere, and is affecting other spheres, as well. Now, many humans abuse their place of influence and the sphere that was entrusted to them with the very gifts that God gave them to inherit at their birth. They use that in a negative way, and the impact of it is an increase of darkness that continues to increase in their sphere of influence.

The reason this is important for us to understand is so that we will not be passive about our sphere of influence, even if our sphere is very small, and even if it is only one or two people. What we say and do will impact that sphere, and this is a way that God governs the earth that He will not change. Another reason—not just so we will be more diligent and attentive in our sphere—is that we know that our actions really do matter. What we do and what we say really does matter. We really can change the future. The future really can be better. And our deeds and our words today impact the changes of our future tomorrow. It is real. We really can have a better future in our individual lives, in our sphere of influence, and even the earth itself. What we do matters in the effect of changing it. That is one reason we want to know this, so that we are attentive diligent in understanding the importance of our life, day by day, in what we do and what we say.

IT MATTERS HOW WE USE WHAT WE HAVE

How we use our resources and our time really does matter. Though often the impact is small, it is real. It matters to God and it counts. Another reason that we want to understand this principle is because of one of the common, perplexing statements that people in the earth, across the earth, make. That is, that if God is a God of love, then why does He let this happen? It is perplexing and confusing because of what they do not understand. God really did give the earth to the decisions of humans, and that is something that many humans do not understand. They think if God is God, He ought to override the free will of everyone, and everything should then be good if He is really God.

What God is saying is, “I am God and I have all authority; but in My sovereign wisdom, and in My kindness, and in My desire for relationship with My people, I did delegate real authority to people; and what they do

really matters. Even I will not step across certain boundary lines of what I have ordained in the government of the earth. I really gave it to man, and if men choose evil, evil will go forward; and if men choose good, then good will go forward.” It will; it will contend with evil and good will triumph. The Man Christ Jesus chose good. And that good is increasing through His people across the globe, and it will ultimately fill the whole earth. We already know the storyline of where it is going, but we have a dynamic place in the drama.

Our impact may be small, but it is real, and it matters to God. It really affects the quality of life of people in our sphere of influence here. It really does matter. It is not a practice game, it is real and it counts. Understanding that this dominion of the earth has been given to the human race gives us a sober view about our life. It is exciting, too, because it gives a sense of importance. It also helps us interpret the evil that is in the world. Instead of putting it upon God’s passive leadership, we actually understand that God, in His great kindness and wisdom, and His desire for partnership with people, actually allowed for evil to increase. Because He so values relationship with people, He puts dignity upon their free will. And so it is, it is. We are responsible to use that privileged position to its fullest benefit in the grace of God.

HUMBLED BY HIS VALUE OF US

David touches on this theme. He says in Psalms 8:4, “What is man that You are mindful of him, and the son of man that You visit him?” David is awestruck by God’s value of humans. He says, “How is it that You think so much about them? How is it that we are so important? You are so high, and we are so low, and yet we matter so much to You” (v. 4, paraphrased). The Most High God went so low in becoming man, in facing the cross, and in bearing the penalty for our sin. The Most High went so low to involve us because He wanted to bring us so near to Him—because we are so dear to Him.

That is what David was capturing in this reality, in this truth. He says in verse 5, “For You have made him a little lower than angels.” In this age, we are a little lower than angels. But, in the eternal drama of God, the eternal storyline, humans who are redeemed are far higher than angels. Then David went on and said in v. 6, “You have made him to have dominion over the works of Your hands; You have put all things under his feet.”

In the general sense, “to have dominion over the works of Your hands,” is, in fact, “You have put all things under the feet of human beings, and You break in relationship to how they relate to You. You break into the affairs of the earth related to how humans relate to You” (v. 6, paraphrased). David was awestruck by the honor and the value and the glory that God gave humans in giving them that much ability to determine what happens on the earth. He says, “You have crowned them with glory and honor” (v. 5). He says, “They are crowned with this honor before You” (v. 5, paraphrased).

EVERYTHING IS YOURS, TAKE A BREATH

Now, in 1 Corinthians 3, Paul talks about this same thing. And he says in 1 Corinthians 3:21, “For all things are yours.” This is Paul talking to the church in Corinth. In that context, the church of Corinth was in the midst of great strife. People were debating and fighting against each other. They were fighting for their own rights to push forward their own position. “Hey this is mine, and this is my turf and my position and my rights.”

The other guy in the church was stepping over on his turf, and Paul says, “Take a step back. Take a deep breath. Do you understand the big picture? Everything is yours. You do not have to carry on this way in the short term. If you understood the big picture of how God has involved you, even in the leadership of the earth, even in the ownership of the earth—because as co-heirs with Christ, we are literally a part of the ownership of the earth in

the future—and why would you lose your way in the small picture, because you cannot see the big picture of the truth of what is happening?” (1 Cor. 3:21, paraphrased)

Verse 21, he says, “All things are yours.” Then he goes on in verse 22 and he begins to give some specifics. “For the world is yours. It belongs to you because of Christ Jesus, because it belongs to Jesus and Jesus has joined Himself to us. Therefore, it belongs to us” (paraphrased).

He says, “Life belongs to you, and death belongs to you” (v. 23, paraphrased). Now look at the next phrase, “Things present and things to come” (v. 23, paraphrased). So, we know the age to come belongs to us. We know the dominion mandate that God gave the leadership of the earth to humans. We know that is eternal. It is for the age to come, as well, not just for this age. But notice, things present are ours, as well. We have authority in Christ to affect things even now. Then, he goes on to say, “Everything is yours. All is yours and you belong to Jesus” (vss. 22, 23, paraphrased). The reason everything is ours is because we belong to Jesus, and everything is His. We are joined to Him as His Body and as His Bride. We have a joining to Him in a deep and dynamic way.

THE TREASON OF HUMANITY

Let’s go to paragraph B. What did Adam do with this remarkable entrusting of authority, in this invitation to partnership in the governing of the earth, in the affairs of the earth? That he was given the primary, governing role on the earth as a human was such a high privilege. What did he do with this primary, governing role that God gave him as a man?

He committed high treason. When Satan came to him, he gave his allegiance to Satan—in that moment when he denied the Lord’s leadership and gave himself to Satan’s leadership—when he sinned and broke his alliance with God. In doing that, something very, very important happened; he gave his primary, governing role over the earth to Satan.

Now, this is something that Satan, in Luke 4:6, brought up when he was tempting Jesus in the wilderness. He was trying to get Jesus to do what Adam did. He was tempting Jesus in the same ways that He tempted Adam. But where the first Adam fell, the last Adam, the second Man did not fall. Jesus resisted. In the same position, at a critical moment in salvation history, the second Adam, the second Man, resisted and overcame. It was the Garden of Eden drama played out a second time. That is what Satan was doing. And Satan made a very important statement that gives us insight into the dynamics of what took place. He said this, “This authority is mine. It has been given. It has been delivered to me, and I give it to whomever I wish” (Luke 4:6, paraphrased).

THE PRINCIPLE OF INTRINSIC AUTHORITY

Now, here is the principle. When God gave the authority of the earth to Adam, it was intrinsic. Having the authority was not symbolic. It was real. It was really Adam’s. Intrinsic to having that position, he could give it to whomever he wanted because it was his to give. That is how real it was. And then, Adam gave it to Satan. And here, Satan is using that same principle of intrinsic authority and offering it to Jesus. Now, Jesus did not interrupt Satan and say, “You know, you are lying about how that happened. You do not really have the right to give it to Me.” The truth is, Satan could hand it to Him. Of course, Satan is a liar and Jesus would never break His alliance with the Father to get the government of the earth that way. He did it in the legitimate way of righteousness. The point of it is this: Satan really was given the leadership of the earth. That is why, in 2 Corinthians 4:4, Satan is called “the god of this world.” He became the god of this world the moment that Adam

abdicated his leadership, his primary, governmental role. When he Adam abdicated it to Satan, Satan took it; but that was only the beginning of the story. Jesus, fully God, became man. He came down to the earth and became a human. And, when Jesus became a man, He became a human forever.

It is not as though, when He was raised from the dead, He cast off the garments of humanity. Jesus will be human forever now. It was a most radical decision. But, the reason Jesus became human was because He had to be human in order to win, in order to redeem humans and win the right of the earth back to the human race. He could not do that only as God. He is always God, forever God. Jesus is fully God in the past, fully God in the present, and fully God in the future. But, He came as a man to win the authority of the earth and the salvation of the human race, to win it, and to pay the price for the debt, and to win it in a legal way.

BACK IN HIS HANDS

Paul talks about that, that on the cross, as a man, He defeated Satan. And He made a public spectacle of Satan before all. It says here in Colossians 2:15, “Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.” He said, “He disarmed the principalities and powers” (1 Cor. 2:15, paraphrased). Who are the principalities and powers? They are the demonic hierarchy that has government over the earth. There are many different ranks of authority within the unseen demonic kingdom, just like there are many levels of authority in the angelic hierarchy, and just like in the human arena. There are many levels of authority in society. What Paul is declaring is a fact of history: that at the cross and in the resurrection, Jesus disarmed Satan. He took the authority away from the powers and principalities, from the demonic hierarchy. He triumphed over them by His death and resurrection. By His death, He paid the price for human sin so that justice was satisfied. By the resurrection, God raised this Man from the dead and showed forth His victory over Satan’s power of death. It says that He made a public spectacle of them. That is an interesting concept, that all the heavenly realm and all the demonic realm witnessed a Man being raised from the dead with a physical body.

By the favor of God and by the power of God, He was raised from the dead. All of hell saw it, and all of heaven saw it, and one point being that it was witnessed by the multitudes of the spirit realm—this was an historic fact that was witnessed by multitudes. It was a public spectacle. Satan was defeated. He knew it. All in heaven and all in hell knew he was defeated in that moment. But, the challenge was the people on the earth for whom Jesus won this authority back—they do not necessarily know it. That is where the drama comes, and that is where the war is. As long as we do not know that Jesus has the authority over earth and has delegated it to us, Satan can continue to operate his puppet government to undermine that authority. If Satan is not challenged, he will just continue as he is. When challenged, he must submit. If not challenged, he can go forward as he always has.

KNOW THE VICTORY, DO YOUR PART

So, by the triumph of Jesus over Satan, the victory was won. But the people of God on the earth, who are actually alive on the earth, have to identify with that victory. They have to exert that victory, and they have to enforce it, in order for it to be manifest openly before all to see. So, Satan’s goal is to keep that from the people of God. That is why many believers do not even know this. It is in the Bible, but they do not know it. Therefore, when Satan challenges them, they do not challenge Satan back, using their authority in Jesus. Rather, they submit to the attack of Satan, and they just whimper around, and they have self-pity, and they moan, and they tell their friends, and they even pray about it in the right spirit, with a spirit of faith.

They pray about it and say, “Oh God, the Devil is beating me up. Do something!” But, God will not rebuke the Devil for us. He will not do it. We can say, “Oh, God! Do something about the Devil!” God has already done

something about the Devil. He will not do our part and we cannot do His part. There is a division of labor in the kingdom of God. God has a role and His people have a role.

The analogy I have used over the years is the farmer. The farmer has to plant his seeds, and he has to pull the weeds. And, if he does not plant seeds and pull the weeds, there will be no harvest. Now, that farmer can love God, and pray and fast and worship, and say, “Oh, God; plant the seeds and pull the weeds. I love You. I fast. I pray. I read my Bible.”

But if God says, “I will not plant those seeds. I will not do it. And I will not pull the weeds. Not because it is beneath Me, but because I want relationship with you, and I have given that work to you. I will not do your part and you cannot do My part. I will provide the sun. I will provide the rain. I will provide the processes of life in the plant, and in the things that you cannot do. But I will not do your part.”

If the farmer prays; I mean, with fervency and sincerity twelve hours a day, and he does not plant the seeds and pull the weeds, his family will starve. God will not intervene to change that. For the farmer to ask God to do the farmer’s role is not faith; it is called “presumption.”

SATAN HAS ALREADY LOST

Now, one of the common errors that I see in the Body of Christ today, in relationship to Satan with his puppet government, is that the government is already disarmed. It is already defeated. For the time being, between the cross and the resurrection, and the second coming of Christ, Satan has room to continue to exert his authority. If he is not challenged, he will continue to do it. But when he is challenged, he has to submit. He knows it. His goal is to make sure we do not know it, even though it is in the Word. Many people do not read the word, so they live in ignorance of their authority and their rights.

TWO ERRORS IN THE BODY OF CHRIST

Here are two of the common errors in the body of Christ: Error number one is that when God commands us to resist Satan, believers will ask God to resist Satan.

“Oh, God and Jesus, resist the Devil and make him leave!” I want to tell you—and I say this reverently—that the Lord’s answer is, “No, I will not do that. I will not plant the seeds and pull the weeds, and I will not rebuke the Devil for you. I have already defeated him. If you do not stand and resist him, he will not be resisted.”

Many people pray to God that God would do what God entrusted to us. I want to say that clearly. God will not do it. The Devil will continue to ravage and destroy the lives of believers, though he has had no right to do so after the cross and resurrection. But God will not stop it; He will speak His word to His people. The reason the Lord will not do it is that He says, “No. I want a dynamic relationship with you. I have already given you the remainder of the earth. I have given you the authority of My Son. I want you in relationship with Me to exert that authority. If you do not, then that authority will be usurped by Satan.”

The second error by well-meaning believers is that they put Satan’s attack under the banner of God’s sovereignty, and they do it in a non-biblical way. They apply the sovereignty in a presumptuous way. Meaning, the Devil knocks on their door and brings a package to their house. That package is full of snakes, and the biblical response is, “Get thee behind me. Go, in the name of Jesus.” But, what some well-meaning believers

who are untaught in their authority say, is, “Well, thank You God.” They invite the Devil in and and they just let the snakes loose in the house.

They say, “God I trust You. God, I love You. I trust Your leadership.”

God says, “If you trust My leadership, then do what I say. Command the snakes to leave.”

“No Lord. Not if You sent the snakes.”

“I did not send the snakes. The Devil did. I defeated the Devil. I gave you authority and I commanded you to resist him. Do not appeal to my sovereignty when I have entrusted authority to you. Use My authority.”

Many sincere believers worship and love Jesus. But they do not have any revelation of their authority in Christ, and they put it, in a presumptuous and wrong way, under the banner of sovereignty. It is a misapplication of the glorious doctrine of the sovereignty of God. Under the sovereignty of God, our actions matter. A lot of people, under the banner of the sovereignty of God, just take a big nap and go to sleep. They just live spiritually passive, and it is just presumptuous. It is not real. We are to say “no” to the enemy.

THE AUTHORITY HAS BEEN GIVEN

Paragraph C. We have been given authority. Authority is delegated power. The power is the brute force. That is what the power is. I mean, it is raw strength and power and brute force. Authority is, well, let me give the analogy of the policeman. I have used this one over the years. The policeman stands in the road and puts his hand up, and stops the traffic. A policeman stops the traffic by authority—not by power. The power is in the national government and the national military.

Theoretically, the policeman’s hand stops the car, because the government and the power of the entire government are behind that hand of that policeman. When the car comes, the policeman does not bend over and ram his shoulder into the car to stop the car by his power. The power is in the military. He stops the car by authority, knowing the power of the military is behind him. Jesus has the power. I mean, the raw strength. We put our hand up and show our badge—and our badge is the name of Jesus. If we use it, the car will stop. In the spiritual sense, the demon will stop. The demon is obligated to obey the name of Jesus. But, here is the problem. The car comes, the believer says, “Oh God, stop the car. Stop the car. Stop the car!”

God says, “Raise your hand and stop the car.”

“Oh God, please stop the car!” The car runs them over—I am talking about a demonic attack—“Oh God, thank You. I just trust You, God.”

He says, “Do not trust Me for that. Rise up! Get healed in My name, and kick that thing out of your life!”

THE THIEF

John 10. Jesus gives us the nature of the thief, Satan. He is talking about Satan in this context. He gives us insight into his nature, but not just the thief’s nature, his tactics. He says, “Let me tell you about when the thief comes,” talking about Satan. When Satan is involved, Jesus says, “You can be sure of three things. He wants to steal the blessing of God from your family, from your life, and from your sphere of influence” (John 10:10,

paraphrased). Whenever Satan is involved, it is to steal. It is to murder you. It is to kill you and your family, and it is to destroy what God has given you.

Jesus says, “Have no question about it. That is his nature. That is his battle plan. That is his tactic. Whenever he is involved, it is always to kill, steal and to destroy” (v. 10, paraphrased). He must be stopped. And we can only stop him by the police analogy, by showing our badge, putting our hand up, and invoking the name of the power that we represent. Just as the policeman evokes the name of the government that backs him up, we invoke the name of the government that backs us up: Jesus and the kingdom of God.

But we must exert that authority. If we do not, the car will run us over. It really will. And it will not be God’s doing and it will not be something God allowed; not in that kind of strange sense, because God says, “No. That is not what I wanted, but, in My sovereignty, I have placed so much dignity on your human free will. I will let you decide to be run over if you want to be. But I would rather you obey My word and exert your authority.”

Our free will is real; it is not a practice game. He gave the dominion to us. In our individual sense, that is that little sphere of influence that we have. But collectively, it is a huge sphere of influence. I want to use my authority in my individual sphere and I want to use it in connection with the body of Christ, the covenant community. The body of Christ can make a big impact together as we are connected to believers all across the planet. Satan when, he comes, comes to steal. He comes to kill. I know you know this, but I want to just say it clearly.

NO CEASEFIRE IN THIS WAR

There is no ceasefire in the spirit realm. None. I have been pastoring for thirty-five years now, and over these thirty-five years of pastoring, I have heard this statement so many times—every pastor has. A guy comes and says, “I am so worn out.” Okay, I have heard that thousands of times. “I cannot go on anymore. I cannot take this any longer.”

I say, “Okay, keep going. Where are we going?”

He says, “I quit,” or something like that.

Because they are beaten up and run over after three years, their money is ruined, their body is ruined, their relationships are ruined, and their life is ruined. They are so worn out, and they think that they are giving up because they have been beaten up for three years.

So, would Satan say, “You know what? It has been a rough three years. I am going to give you three months of a ceasefire, and then we will get back to the war.”

No. There is no ceasefire, not when you give up or when anybody gives up. I am not going to put that on you. When a believer gives up, all they are doing is laying their weapons down before the adversary who has weapons. The adversary is not laying his weapons down, and the adversary does not honor a ceasefire.

The adversary says, “We would rather destroy you when you’re not fighting back. We would love you to quit. That is the point. Then, we can destroy you with no challenge.” Beloved, there is no option. This is common to man; we all have the propensity to quit, to get overwhelmed, get tired, and to want to quit.

We are in a real war zone. The war is real. It is not a practice game. You put your weapons down and quit pressing into God, and I assure you that the enemy will not put their weapons down. They would much rather attack you without you exerting the name of Jesus to oppose them. They would much rather you do that. Don't simply live in comfort and just kind of give up and check out. If you are giving up and giving in, and just checking out of walking with God in a passionate way, then you are a recipe for disaster in your life—because the enemy is real. The better option is to say, "I am tired. What am I doing wrong that I need to do differently?" Let's get involved in the war. Let's find out what the word of God says. Let's get connected to other believers, and let's stand and resist according to what the word of God says—and let's win this war! Because it has already been won, but we have to enforce that authority.

NEVER SURRENDER

Paragraph D. That is the very thing that Paul talks about here. In Ephesians 6, he says, "Do not give up. Put the armor on" (Eph. 6:11, paraphrased). Put the armor on and go into the attack mode. Stand, as well as attack. Do not give up and give in. Tell your self-pity good-bye. Break your agreement with your self-pity.

And, just so you know, the whole human race is tempted to quit—on everything, all the time. Just so you know, you are not the main guy that is tempted. All six billion want to quit because of what is in front of them. They think about it many times through their lives. So, do not think that you are the one guy getting especially picked on. It is a temptation common to humanity, but there is no future in it, and there is no victory, and there is no life in it.

In Ephesians 6:12, Paul said, "For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers. . ." Verse 13. I have this abbreviated, this passage here, and you can read it on your own, in its full context: "Take up the whole armor . . . and having done all, stand." Do not yield. Stand. "Taking the shield of faith . . . you will be able to quench . . ." (v. 16, paraphrased). "You will be able to extinguish" is what another translation says. You will be able to cut off the flaming missiles. These darts that come, you can cut them off. You can quench them. Take the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God, and use it."

What Paul is saying is, "You do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but you wrestle against powers and principalities" (v. 12, paraphrased). About the powers and principalities, he is talking about demonic powers that are invisible. You cannot see them with your eyes. They are adversaries that are invisible. They are in the spirit realm. They are demonic. There are many levels in the demonic hierarchy, many different kinds, some powerful ones and some far less powerful ones. They are the principalities and powers in all their different ranks.

Paul is saying, "We do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but we actually wrestle mostly against these invisible enemies." Now, to "not wrestle with flesh and blood" (v. 12, paraphrased); what he means is that our problems are not primarily of human origin. Flesh and blood speaks of that which is of human origin. He says, "You may have a conflict with somebody, and you may have oppression and resistance, but the primary, the primary problem and power, is invisible. It is spiritual. It is not primarily human." Though our problems have human dimensions to them, to assume that if we solve the human dilemma, then the supernatural, invisible dilemmas will go away, is wrong. He says, "Do not do that. Your primary contest is against the demonic principalities and powers."

TAKE UP THE ARMOR OF GOD

Paul says in verse 13, “Take up the whole armor.” Now in this passage, Paul speaks of the Roman armor that was so familiar to everyone in that day, and Paul outlines six different facets of the Roman soldier’s attire and equipment. I am not going to go through those six different facets. Different people have different opinions on what they symbolize. But here is one thing you can walk away with. What they mean is, all six of them together come down to one simple principle, that we are to agree with God in our thoughts, in our words, and in our deeds. If you agree with God in your thoughts, words and deeds, then you have all six pieces of armor on. That is what they boil down to when it is all studied and you summarize it. If we agree with God in our thinking, then we agree with God in our words, and when we speak against the enemy, it is when we speak the word of God. We agree with God in our actions. If you do that, all six pieces of armor are in place in your life. That is just to make it simple.

THE MISSILES OF THE ENEMY

Now, he says, “We can quench all these flaming missiles, these darts.” Here is how it operates. The enemy comes at us like darts that have fire on them, and they sting us. It is like a hornet stinging us. They come, and they make a temporary impact that is negative. You pull the dart off, and a little while later the pain goes away and the impact is done, and you think, “Man! I did not like that. That was not very pleasant.”

Paul is saying, “The enemy has an arsenal of these darts that he is shooting at you—these demons that are touching you. They are heightening the intensity of the battle. If you will use the sword of the Spirit, you can extinguish every single one of them when they come. All of them can be silenced and cut off. Every single one of them.”

Now how do we use the sword of the Spirit? It is amazing. The sword of the Spirit is the Word of God. We can swing the sword in the spirit realm by simply speaking the word about Jesus’ authority and Jesus’ victory. We do this by proclaiming it with our lips. It is so simple that everyone can do it, but it is so simple that most people do not. The way that we release the sword against these demonic forces is by simply agreeing—with our mouths—agreeing with the victory of Jesus. It is the police officer that holds his hand up. If he holds his hand up, the car stops. If he does not hold his hand up, the car keeps going. It is very easy. Hold your hand up. Blow the whistle, the car stops. There is nothing to it.

Everybody can do that because it is the power of the government behind the police. It is the power of Jesus behind us who is speaking these words. We say, “Jesus, by His death and resurrection, has victory over you, Satan. Go, in the name of Jesus.” You can use any phrases. There is no magical phrase. It is simply with the words of your mouth, speaking against the enemy, declaring the name of Jesus. Demons are obligated to obey it if you will stay with it. You must stay with it. It is not just a one-time deal and it is over. We stay with it. That is how you swing the sword.

WRESTLING AGAINST THE ENEMY

Verse 12, we wrestle against principalities and powers. That word “wrestle” is a very important word. Meaning, it is a process. Now, we wrestle by speaking the word against these flaming missiles that strike us. We speak the word of Jesus’ victory. That is how we wrestle. The wrestling match, or the swinging of the sword, is simply or mostly done by uttering the victory of Jesus to the demon. Now, we do not see the demon, but the demon sees us. We wrestle. So, number one, it is a process. Number two, when we wrestle, it is up close and personal. It is not, you know, two armies shooting arrows at each other across the valley. The wrestling match, is up close and

personal. In a wrestling match, you get weary and you get tired. I mean, it is exerting energy. It is like a wrestling match: suddenly, one guy is on top; in a minute the other guy is on top. But, a minute later, the first guy is on top again. Then, the other guy, and it looks like the battle is shifting several times in the match. But beloved, the victory is already secured. You do not get tired by shooting arrows across the valley. It is up close and personal in the valley. You do not have those sudden reversals. Wrestling is such a perfect word for this.

Now, what we like is to shoot just one time. We say it, and it is over. Paul said, “No, no! It is wrestling. It is wrestling!”

ATTACKED BY OTHER FORCES

Paragraph E. Our problems often result from several factors working together. Meaning, I do not want to give a simplistic presentation of our struggles. Some say, “It is all demons.” It is not all demons. There are human dimensions that are involved. But, the demons are the unseen ones, and they have the greater power. The others have power, as well. There are psychological issues. We have mindsets and belief systems that are wrong that cause our problems. We have to change our mindsets. There are sometimes chemical imbalances in our body. Sometimes it is what we put into our body. Diet and chemicals and pills, and all kinds of things; and if we change what we put into our body, or we change some of the physiological dimensions of the warfare, some things could be better. Sometimes it is social. People use their free will to come against you, and God honors their free will. They have a certain limit to what they can do. But, wicked people really do decide to do wicked things, and they get to do a lot of the wickedness that is in their hearts—not fully—God does put a limit on it. But, He allows them to exercise their free will. It is a real war zone down here. It is real. But then, the fourth thing is, there are demonic powers. There are these missiles, these darts. They sting us, and when they sting us, there is a heightened sense of the problem that has this extra energy to it.

That is the demonic. Now Paul is saying, “You can observe the physiological, the psychological. You can study that just by human reasoning. You can observe it. But there is an invisible force you cannot see with your eyes, and you need the revelation of the word to know that they are there. You need the revelation of the word to know you have authority over them.” For many believers, though they technically believe in the demonic realm, it is not a practical part of their everyday worldview. They do not really think about it much. When they run into problems, they go right to the psychological, the physiological, the sociological dimensions. They do not address the spiritual.

TWO ARE IN EVERY BUSH

One guy heard me talk about this some years ago and he said, “Well, when I hear you talk, it sounds like you think there is a demon behind every bush.”

I said, “I do not think that.”

He says, “Well, it sure sounds like it.”

I said, “There is not a demon behind every bush. There are two demons behind every bush.”

Here is my point. If the veil between the spirit and the physical realm was to be lifted, this room is filled with angels and demons, and they are in conflict. The angels move when we agree with God; the angels are dispatched. When we agree with God and we exert ourselves, and we call on the name of Jesus, angels move.

Angels drive back demons and the demons only move back when we show our badge, so to speak, and that is when we speak the name of Jesus. They do not move back because we are hurt, or we are whimpering, or we are sincere, or we are sad, or we are fasting. Demons say, “Fine. Just do not show your badge. If you show your badge, we have got to move.”

You can even tell God all day long, “Oh God, show my badge to the Devil!”

Then God says, “I am not going to. You show your badge to the Devil.”

OUR AUTHORITY IN CHRIST

Paragraph F. Now, when we use our authority in Christ—which we are going to do in just a moment here—what we are doing is, we are removing the demonic, heightened energy. We are removing it out of the equation in a temporary way. When we use our authority, the demonic dimension draws back. The reason I say, “temporary,” is because the demon will come right back. Jesus said that in Matthew 1; that he will come back, seeking for another place of entry, and he will bring seven demons with him. So, when we push the demon back, they really go back. But no, they are coming back again. It is a wrestling match throughout our entire life until we meet the Lord.

But, here is the reason we want the demon driven back out of the equation—here in paragraph F. Then the psychological, the physiological, and the social problems are far easier to deal with. When the demonic missile, the flaming dart is gone, then we can solve the human problems far more easily. We still have to solve the problems, and getting rid of the demon does not make all the consequences go away, but it takes away that heightened energy, that stinging missile that hits you. It takes that out of the equation in a temporary way. The demon will come back and he will bring friends with him. Well, I would not call them friends. I am going to give you an example, one or two examples, of how demons work in strife, and then share another verse or two. Then I am going to pray for you.

TAKING UP OUR AUTHORITY IN ACTION

I remember when I first learned this. I was about twenty-three; so, thirty-two years ago. I am fifty-five now. I remember I was involved in our youth group and we had this one gal who was right in the middle of everything. She created more strife than any one person I have ever seen in my ministry since then. I mean, this gal talked incessantly, was filled with bitterness, and she twisted and turned stories with great skill. She had so many people against each other, and having to meet to solve it, and then find out it was not the truth after all.

Nobody could figure it out. It was just a maze of confusion. In my thirty-five years of pastoring, I do not know very many that caused more trouble than that gal did in a community of believers. It went on for about six weeks; it was just like night and day drama—unstopped. She was not mad at me, so I got to be a part of the negotiation. Nothing could answer her or solve her problem. She was in constant strife. It was so wearisome. I had so many meetings with her and they seemed like we had a solution, and then there was none.

At about that time in my life, I was studying books by different authors on the authority we have in Christ. I remember, I was just learning that subject, and I was reading them from several different places. I never really approached strife this way. I always looked at just the psychological or the social dimensions of strife. I never thought of a demon—like a flaming missile—that was heightening the problem so it could not get fixed. What I did was, I was going to try an experiment. I did not tell anybody. I did not know if it would work. I said, “In the

name of Jesus, I address the spirit that is stirring that woman up,” for about five minutes. I did it five times a day for about five minutes. I did not pray for ten hours—just three, four or five minutes. I did not time it.

“In the name of Jesus, I take authority over that spirit that is stirring up that woman, that is agitating that woman and I cut off that assignment. I speak the name of Jesus and I command that spirit in that woman to go.” I was resisting the Devil. The most remarkable thing happened. The woman, of her own accord, came to me and repented. She told everybody, “I am sorry, I do not know what happened. It just seemed so right, what I was doing, and it now it seems so wrong.” She was a part of that group for some time and never caused trouble again. It was one of the strangest things I had ever seen. And I said, “This is pretty cool. This really works. Oh, my goodness!”

THEY ATTACK EVERYTHING

I could have done it in one day. It was just the season of my life. I was just learning about this, and I had operated in that approach in many areas. Demons attack your finances, even though we have bad financial management. There are demonic elements that can be rebuked. Demons attack our health, although there are physiological things that contribute to bad health, not just all demonic. Demons attack relationships. Demons attack ministry, even though there are other issues that cause ministries to get confused and off-track, etc. So, demons do not cause all the problems, but getting rid of that demonic element makes the landscape very different—very different—in solving the problem.

Just some weeks ago in March, I was with my son, Luke. I was visiting with him and he was saying, “Dad, I have the most bizarre situation. I have this man who is so hostile. This guy, I have never seen him non-hostile. I have been with him the last couple of times. I mean, hostile at a level I have never seen before.” And Luke said his face was red with just this stream of vulgarity, and anger, and murder threats, and he is a violent man. And he says, “I have never seen anything like it. It is fully demonic.”

He says, “This guy is working in the context of where I am working. It is in an out-of-the-way place, in an isolated place, and this man is really intense.”

I am hearing this story. I say, “Let’s address the spirit that is driving the man. The man will still have his bitterness, and still have his ambition, and still have his confusion, but let’s bind the spirit that is driving him.”

Luke says, “Okay. Let’s do it.” So we took some time. We had a couple of short prayer times. Again, you know, it does not have to take hours. We took authority over that spirit. I bound that spirit and both of us together bound it, and Luke did as well.

Then, I said, “Let’s go visit him tomorrow.”

Luke said, “Well, it is in an isolated place. And this guy is dangerous, for-real dangerous, not pretend dangerous. I have never seen anybody this hostile and this violent.”

I said, “Okay, just so I do not exaggerate the story, I will if you will.” We inched our way forward, a little male bonding in the process.

So we went to meet this guy. And again, it is in an isolated place. He has a group of people with him who are really angry and hostile with him. And so, we drive over and Luke says, “Are we going to do this?”

I say, “Are we?”

He says, “Okay, let’s do it.” And we agreed, “Yes. We are going to do it.” So we get out of the car and this guy walked up to us. And, as he came, Luke said, “Wow! This is different. His countenance looks entirely different.”

We talked for an hour. Laughed a number of times. Shook hands. No hostility at all. Luke said, “This is a miracle of the largest proportion.” And, at the end, the guy actually gave me a sideways hug. Luke said, “This is inconceivable—that he would do this.”

I said, “Well, the man will probably get stirred up again because the demon is coming back. But we know we can address the demon that is stirring this man up.” Again, the same thing works in finances, physical healing, relational conflict, and in all kinds of areas. And again, do not give all of the problem to the demon.

THE FLAMING MISSILE

Paragraph C in the middle of page 2. Let’s remove the flaming missile. Just very simply, James 4:7 says, “Resist the Devil.” I already talked about those two principles, the two common mistakes: First, do not ask God to resist the Devil. You have to show the badge, so to speak. You have to resist the Devil in the name of Jesus by proclaiming the authority of Jesus. God will not resist the Devil for you. Do not ask Him to. He will not. Second, do not thank God for the Devil’s attack. “God I just love You. I trust Your leadership. Whatever You want.”

God says, “Well, I do not want that.”

You say, “Well, if You do not want it, God, then do something.”

He says, “No, already did something. We have got a dilemma. I do not want it and I am not going to do anything more. That is the dilemma. You use the authority. You speak the victory of Jesus. You use the name of Jesus.”

So, in other words, you show your badge persistently. You wrestle with that principality, using the name of Jesus with your words. That is how you do it. You speak and it is very simple. So simple, anyone can do it. So simple, and yet so few do it.

THE SPIRIT OF FEAR

We will end here with paragraph D, just the first part of the sentence in 2 Tim. 1:7, because this is what I want to pray over you. Paul says, “God has not given us a spirit of fear.” God has given us a spirit of power. God has given us a spirit of love. He has given us a sound mind.”

In the place of “sound mind,” put the word “peace.” He has given us supernatural peace. That is what a sound mind is. That is a part of it. Now, here is what happens. There is natural fear, and there is fear that is stirred up by a spirit. There is a spirit of fear, which means a demon is involved. And sometimes, natural fears and a

demon of fear go together. But natural fears are not all bad. If you are walking in the middle of the street and you see a lion and you feel afraid, that is good. That is wisdom. Natural fears are not all bad. Some of them are protective. But, Satan is a spiritual lion. We do not have to be afraid of the spiritual lion. If there is a spirit, there is demonic contribution to fear involved. So, let's separate the idea, even though, sometimes, natural and spiritual fears go together. There is a spirit of fear, demonic fear is what I mean.. We rebuke a spirit of fear. Do not ask God to lift it from you. Rebuke it. Do not ask God to resist the Devil and show your badge for you. You show the badge.

THE AUTHORITY IS THERE

We are going to pray now. And, I would like you all to stand, if you would. There are a number of you that are being assaulted with a spirit of fear. Now, this is not because you are bad. This is not because you have a propensity to something sinful and negative. That is not the point.

It is a demon that has an assignment from hell to take you out, to demobilize you with fear. It is a supernatural fear. And here is how this fear feels: It is an irrational surge of fear that comes for a few moments or a few hours. Beloved, it is a demon. It is a flaming missile. Sometimes that fear will hit you in the night. You wake up in the middle of the night, like there's an evil presence in your room. Do not endure it. Rebuke it. Do not just sit there, frozen, paralyzed for an hour. You do not even have to raise your voice because the authority is not in your voice or your personality. You do not hack and swing the sword. You do not have to do that, either. The authority is not in any antics. It is not in your personality. It is not in the volume.

The authority is in one Man, in saying His name, the name of Jesus, and proclaiming His authority. All the authority that is there—you can even whisper it. You can be in a public place. You can be in a shopping mall, or a school, or a bus. You can whisper it, and it works. You do not have to scream it, thinking that if you scream it, you really mean it. No, that is goofy thinking. It is not if you scream you really mean it, and if you whisper it, you do not quite mean it. It is the name of Jesus that matters. You can be in a public place and use it all the time, and no one even knows it. Maybe some of you are having nightmares, and every few weeks, or a month or so, you have a nightmare. Maybe for some of you, you just kind of turn the corner, and all of a sudden, this irrational fear, like, "Ah!" It hits you for three minutes or three hours. You say, "That was such a weird emotion. What was that?"

Beloved, you do not have to endure that storm. You need to rebuke the storm, and not ask God to deliver you from fear. Rebuke the spirit of fear. The reason you have it is not because something is intrinsically wrong. It is because the enemy has an assignment to take you out—because you are important to God. So, do not, do not get all down in the dumps and say, "Oh no, how come me?" Everybody gets assaulted with fear in different ways throughout the course of their life. We have to take authority over it. So, if you have these attacks, whether they come for a few moments or a few hours, and they seem irrational, but they still come to you. I would like you to come forward if you would like prayer for it. Even now, if you would just come on up here, we are going to take authority together.