

Ministry of Authority

by Paris Reidhead

Paris Reidhead's sermon emphasizes our identity as kings and priests in Christ, the necessity of overcoming self-confidence, and the responsibility to exercise God's authority in the world.

Duration: 31:55

Scripture: Acts 17:11, Ephesians 1:18, Ephesians 2:10, Ephesians 3:16-17, Ephesians 6:12-13, Revelation 1:5

Topics: "Authority"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes that as believers, we have been given the victory that Jesus accomplished on the cross. He uses the analogy of a cruel mortgage holder who not only demands payments but also brings torment and unhappiness to the debtor. However, a friend comes and pays off the mortgage in full, freeing the debtor from the torment. Similarly, Jesus paid the price for our sins on the cross, conquering our ancient foe. Now, as members of the body of Christ, it is our responsibility to enforce this victory in the world. The preacher also highlights the need to demolish our self-confidence and pride in order to fully embrace God's grace and fulfill our role as kings and priests unto God.

Transcript

Thank you, thank you, Dwight. The text for the message and song is found in Ephesians, the second chapter, in the tenth verse. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus under good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

Are you willing to be all that he wants you to be? In Revelations, the first chapter and the fifth verse, we are told unto him who loved us, who washed us in his blood, and hath made us to be kings and priests unto God. He didn't ask us if we would like to, he didn't invite us to volunteer. He has made us to be kings and priests unto God.

But there's a problem. The problem is that in preparation for grace, there has to be demolished in us that strong mountain of self-confidence and pride. We are victims of the philosophy expressed in that very rousing song, I am the master of my fate.

I am the captain of my soul. And I can do just about anything. These ideas so permeate this society and all societies that it does seem rather hard for people to grasp that by our works no man shall be justified in his sight.

So when people are prepared for grace, there has to be a demolishing of that self-confidence. I have to be brought down to the place that indeed we are worms in the dust when it comes to pleasing God, when it comes to providing Him with that which is going to atone for our sin and satisfy the law. And consequently, we have a problem.

It's true that the law is the schoolmaster to bring us to Christ and to prove that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. And that there's nothing that we can bring to atone for our past sins. We're totally closed up to Christ.

And we therefore are, shall we say, just the petitioners, as was the publican who came down to the gate of the temple and who cried, God, be merciful to me, a sinner. Now that's the position that we enter the Christian life. Bankrupt, spiritually.

Nothing that we can offer. Nothing to present. Simply pleading for mercy, pleading for forgiveness on the basis of the finished work of Christ.

It's a little difficult, I say, knowing that we are forgiven, we are pardoned with the assurance that we're children of God, to overcome that first attitude that we had concerning ourselves as we met God. Now, after one is forgiven, after one is pardoned, one is born into the family of God, the worm-in-the-dust mentality sometimes continues. And God's concern is to not keep us on our faces before Him in that kind of brokenness.

Once we've entered into that, once we've understood it, once we've truly been convicted of our sin and have repented of our sin and have savingly received Christ, then He wants us to understand the glorious privileges of the children of God. But it's still a little difficult because we're going to carry that worm-in-the-dust attitude with us. And we shouldn't.

We should recognize that when God looked upon us, He did see this horrendous crime of sin, of turning to our own way. And He did deal with it the way His justice demanded. And He did demand of us repentance.

And He did send His Son to die that His law might be vindicated and His righteousness upheld. But now that we're born into God's family, He wants us to understand that we have tremendous worth, tremendous value, that you are important to Him, that you're a child of God, that you are, as one man has said and has been rather laughed at by others who thought it was a bit puerile, you are indeed a king's kid. A little hard to take, you know, that.

It is a little bit impious, isn't it? A little bit puerile to say that we are king's kids. Well, probably much better to say that we're children of our Heavenly Father or I'm a child of the King. We had no trouble singing that.

But it's hard to grasp just who you are in Christ. That God has a tremendous investment in you. He's made you a little lower than the angels that He might crown us with glory and with honor.

We have been, that God put this enormous investment in us. You know, I don't know what He, how He made angels, what His prototype or plan for angels with cherubim or seraphim was. I don't know.

The Bible doesn't tell us. But it does tell us this, that He made man in His image and in His likeness. He gave to man on a finite level the attributes that He, God, possesses on an infinite, unlimited level.

He gave us the ability to think and to feel and to choose. These are enormous investments that God has made, put into us. The ability to think and to feel and to choose.

Now that we're born into the Father's family, now that our purpose is to please Him, it is His intent for us to understand the high and the holy privileges that are ours. That's the reason why Paul, writing to the church at Ephesus, gave the scripture that was read for you a little earlier. For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit deep in the inner man, so that Christ can dwell in your heart through faith.

Oh, what a marvelous, marvelous revelation. Highest revelation in scripture. That Christ is going to dwell in our hearts through faith.

And in the portion that was read for us, the first prayer that the eyes of our understanding may be opened that we might know the exceeding greatness of His power to us who believe, which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead. He wants us to understand that Christ is going to live in us the way the Father lived in Him, and that the very power of the Father manifest through Christ is to be released and manifest through us. Now this is extremely difficult for us to grasp, because, as I said, the I am a worm in the dust mentality, it gets such a firm grasp upon us.

And it's very, very difficult for us to overcome. But we've got to overcome it. So the Apostle does everything that he can.

John, in writing the book of Revelation, by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, explicitly stated we are kings and priests. Now we saw last Sunday a priest is one who goes into the presence of God in behalf of the sinner and legally represents the sinner before God, and then comes out from the presence of God into the presence of the sinner and represents God to the sinner. But a king, what's his responsibility? And on what basis is ours? Well, we're heirs and joint heirs together with Christ.

And the Lord Jesus was a priest after the order of Melchizedek, not after the order of Levi, and therefore He was a king and a priest. So as in Christ, authority and intercession were joined in us likewise. And we are also to understand that as kings, children of the king, born into the family of God, it's our responsibility to exercise the victory of Christ in the affairs of men.

Now if we don't do it, then for all practical purposes, His victory was for naught. I must go back into that so that you'll see it. He didn't ask us if we wanted to be kings.

He washed us in His blood and made us to be kings. It's our responsibility. And the function of a king is to exercise authority.

And in this case, the authority that we exercise is that which has been given to the Lord Jesus Christ. So in the portion read for us earlier, that the eyes of our understanding might be opened, that we might know the exceeding greatness of His power to us were to believe according to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenlies, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, and gave Him to be head over all things of the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in awe. Now, what's the purpose of this? The eyes of our understanding to be opened, to realize how the authority of Christ is to be exercised in the world, to illustrate it.

How can I illustrate it? One of the pictures in the Scripture of the world is the ocean, is the sea, called the nation. It's a type picture. Suppose you were to go down to Myrtle Beach or one of the other beaches, and you were to look out and see someone whose head resembled mine.

There aren't many. But you would say, well, look at that. There's old Reedhead's head floating on the ocean.

That's strange, isn't it? Just floating along, smiling. Well, maybe it's the Reedhead and maybe it should float, but it doesn't work that way. This particular head is only going to be seen as floating on the ocean as long as the body is attached to it.

Now, under that head, up to the ear in salt water in the ocean, all you see is the head. You can understand that there are arms and legs and torso and all the rest is covered from sight to the benefit of all concern. So it's underwater.

There it is, floating on the top of the water. The head in the air and the body maybe down there fishing for clams with toes or with some kind of a hook. You don't know what it's doing, but it's down there working away, trying to find maybe a watch that was lost or something else.

You don't know, but busy, as always, doing something. And now you have a picture of what is read to us in Ephesians 1. Our head, the Lord Jesus Christ, is in the heavenlies. The head is the Lord Jesus at the right hand of the Father.

All authority in heaven and earth is given to Him. His body is in the world, in the sea. And it's His body that's doing the work among the nations, among the people.

And He has put all of His authority and all of His power under what? Under His feet. What are the feet? Well, they're part of the body. They're the part that moves and the part that stands, the part that is essential for the exercise of the authority.

So our head, the Lord Jesus, is there at the right hand of the body, and we are in Him because we're part of His body. We're seated together in the heavenlies in Christ. But the head is in us.

Members of His body submerge in the world. And the purpose is that the head can exercise His victory over His ancient defeated foe, the God of this world. In Ephesians, the fourth chapter, we are told that He led captivity captive.

He was captured. He was bound. He was buffeted.

He was beaten. He was crucified. And He died.

But we are told in 1 Corinthians that if the God of this world had known what was going to take place, He never would have slain the Son of God. Because by the crucifying of Christ, the God of this world was led captive. He was brought into captivity.

And so, when the Lord Jesus was brought by captive, as it were, to the cross and to death, and He died, in His resurrection He led captivity captive. He defeated His ancient foe in open conflict. Go back, if you please, to that time when this conflict began.

We have no ideas to the time frame, but somewhere, Isaiah speaking for Christ said, I saw Satan fall as lightning from heaven. What's the battle? Well, the battle is this, that Lucifer, the son of the morning, an intelligent being, has taken weapons with which he's going to set his throne above the most throne of the most high. And one of the weapons he took was the very opposite, or the weapons he took were the very opposite of the character of God.

God is light, so Lucifer took darkness. God is life, so Lucifer took death. God is truth, so Lucifer took the lie.

God is love, so Lucifer took hate. And against love came hate, and against light came darkness, and against life came death, and against truth came the lie. And it was a momentary triumph, and Lucifer was cast as lightning from heaven.

But now, in the fullness of time, God the Son, in order to redeem you, reaches out where you are, draws you to Himself, is made to be what you are, so that you might be made what He is. And in so doing, he now becomes vulnerable. As he goes to the cross to drink the cup of God's wrath against sin, he is also exposed to everything that his ancient foe can do.

So there on the cross, against light comes darkness again, and for three hours he's shrouded in darkness. Against love comes hate, against truth comes the lie, and against life comes death. And the Lord Jesus died, He gave up the ghost, He died of a broken heart, and He was laid in death.

But three days later, that God-life which could not die returned to that body, and He led captivity captive. He's conquered His ancient foe. Now, what's He going to do with that victory? Is He going to stay in time and enforce it? No.

Those who once were the captives of the God of this world, released by the poured-out life of God's Son, now made members of the body of which Christ is the head, are left among the nations to enforce the victory of Calvary. That's you, that's me, in the places of our ministry. We are the members of His body.

He is the head, we the feet, we the various members. And therefore, it's His intent and plan and purpose that we who are joint heirs together with Him, made to be kings and priests, should recognize our responsibility to exercise His victory in the affairs of men. Oh, how many times I've been witnessing to someone, and I've had them say something like this.

I can't see it. I simply don't see it. I hear what you're saying.

I understand all the words. They're all English. I can spell every one of them, but I don't know what they mean.

It's as though you were talking another language. It just doesn't make sense to me. Where was a time when I was quite upset about that, incensed to think they could be so stubborn, until I realized that they were telling the truth.

You see, the Scripture is so explicit. It says, The God of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ should shine unto them. And silently, without moving my lips, but still in prayer, I've said, Father, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, this person, by calling him by name in my silent prayer, has been shrouded.

This hood of darkness of the condemned covers them, lest the light of the gospel should shine. Now I'm here. I've interceded for them.

I've prayed for them. And that hood must be lifted. In the name of Jesus Christ, I resist every effort of a defeated foe to keep this heart in blindness any longer.

And a few moments later saying, Oh, that's what you mean. I never thought like that before. But you see, it was only after I had come to realize that he's turned over to us the responsibility to enforce his victory that I knew how to pray like that.

I hadn't known that before. And oh, how much has taken place in the hearts and lives and homes of people because we've never understood that this so great salvation includes the ministry of authority. And the consequence? The enemy goes rampaging through the hearts and homes and lives of people when he has no right so to do.

I was in a meeting down in the Alliance Church in Asheville, North Carolina, many years ago. One evening I noticed in the congregation a lady that I'd known from Augusta, Georgia who was teaching Bible in the public schools in Hickory, North Carolina. And after the service she came to me and said, Can I speak with you in the pastor's study for a few moments? We went into the pastor's study and she said, You know a sister, and I did.

I knew the family. I knew the situation in Augusta. Her sister was a confirmed alcoholic over many years.

She embarrassed the family greatly. One of the leading families, old families of Augusta. Sister would get out in her night clothing, roam the streets, scream, holler, and the police would have to get her and bring her, take her home.

I knew the story and the chief of police was a friend so they'd bring her back. But she'd become very bad. Brother, said this dear woman, Brother has been telling me that it's my bound and duty to go give up my Bible teaching in Hickory and go back and to spend my time taking care of sister.

And I can't do it. I just have such a problem because the school board has said as long as I'm here in Hickory I can continue to teach but they'll never let anybody else get into the public schools. When I'm finished, it's finished.

She said, I just don't believe my ministry is done. Well, I knew the story as I said. I explained to her the basis of a prayer we were about to pray.

And I said we were going to see Christ in the midst of their family. We're going to put the government on his shoulders and we were going to stand against every effort of a defeated foe to use that sister and the brother in Richmond to take her out of the Hickory public school. And we're going to ask God to set her free so she could continue.

We prayed, Father in the name of Jesus we stand against every effort of this ancient defeated foe to rob the Lord Jesus Christ of the witness in the schools of Hickory, North Carolina. We prayed. We went.

The next summer I was back at Camp Lomaco, which was the Alliance's cute little name for their summer conference. And I was the speaker there. And one night, the last Friday night, I looked up and here was this friend who was from back home in Augusta but spending some time with friends in the Hendersonville

area.

Everybody in Augusta fled to Hendersonville in the summer. It was a wise thing to do. And she was there with the rest of them fleeing from the sultry heat.

And she said, Oh, I never told you what happened the next day after we prayed. I said, You certainly didn't. What happened? She said, Before I left to go to school, my brother called me from Richmond and he said, Sister, I didn't sleep much last night.

I realize I've been totally out of order and wrong asking you to give up the ministry in Hickory when I've got room for our sister in my home. I'm going to start today driving down to Augusta. I'm bringing her back with me.

And I've already made arrangements this morning for her to go into one of the finest institutions in the country for the alcoholics. You go on with your ministry, and I'm sending you a check to help out with it. It wouldn't have worked that way if we hadn't understood.

It was about to become a tragedy where another door was going to be closed. And it's so important for us to understand that He's given to us the ministry of reconciliation. He's committed to us also the ministry of authority.

And it's our responsibility in our homes, in our families, in this church, in the ministry, in this community, as the Spirit of God leads to recognize that He's turned over to us. The victory that He accomplished at Calvary, and He's counting on us to use it. Let me illustrate how this works.

Here's a person that has a mortgage. And the terms of the mortgage are cruel beyond compare. Not only is the party supposed to have payments every month, but in addition, the one who owes the mortgage has the privilege of coming and dumping into that house snakes and serpents and rabid dogs and raccoons and anything else that will bring torture and torment and unhappiness to the people that owe the mortgage.

And some friend comes along and says, this mortgage must stop and I'll pay it in full. But the first of the next month, the old mortgage, former mortgage holder, comes in with his box full of vipers and rabid animals about to dump them. And the party says, you can't do that.

The mortgage is paid. Well, I know the mortgage is paid. You don't have to pay the payments monthly anymore, but that doesn't mean that I can't dump all this poison and torture and torment on you.

Well, it certainly ought to mean it because that was the terms of the mortgage. Oh, no. No, I still have the right to pour all this in on you.

Well, I guess you do then. And so the person stands there while the vipers are poured out and the rabid raccoons are leashed into the home. You think that's insane? Insane not to know the terms of the mortgage.

Don't you think it's equally foolish for us not to understand this great salvation? This ministry of authority that God has given to us to enforce the victory of Christ in the lives of our husbands and wives and neighbors and friends and brothers and sisters and sons and daughters in our business, in school, and wherever we are, to raise the hand against the defeated foe and say, thus far and no further, in the name

of Jesus Christ the Conqueror at Calvary. Don't you think so? Oh, I think so. That doesn't give us authority over people.

We can't make people do what we want them to do. But it gives us authority over principalities and powers and the rulers of the darkness of this age. And they have to let people go.

And usually when they let go, the Spirit of God is working. They come to know Him. Oh, how important it is for us to understand the ministry of authority to enforce the victory of Christ at the little crossroads of our lives.

Shall we bow in prayer? Father of Jesus, if we know through deliverance, if we know truth, happy are we if we do that which we know, if we practice that which we believe, if we permit the Word to have precourse and be glorified in us. Father of Jesus, we would pray that we might be more than those who see themselves in a mirror and then go straight away forgetting what they've seen. But might we take the truth that we've heard, meditate upon it and study it as did the Bereans, and then begin to in childlike faith exercise that truth at the crossroads of our concern.

Stand there like a uniformed policeman knowing we wrestle not with flesh and blood but principalities and powers and the rulers of the darkness of this age and having done all to stand anti-histamine, come again so as to cause the stop. O Father of Jesus, make us experts in enforcing the victory of Christ in those areas that are going to bring glory and honor and praise to Christ. For I will ask it in His peerless, matchless, worthy name.

Amen.

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