

1 John 3:1-3 *See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. All who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure.*

Ephesians 1:3-14 *Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing **in Christ**. For he chose us **in him** before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us for adoption to sonship **through Jesus Christ**, in accordance with his pleasure and will— to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us **in the One** he loves. **In him** we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and understanding, he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed **in Christ**, to be put into effect when the times reach their fulfilment—to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ.*

***In him** we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, in order that we, who were the first to put our hope **in Christ**, might be for the praise of his glory. And you also were included **in Christ** when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked **in him** with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory.*

Looking at these two passages, we see that believers are secure in Christ in the same way that Christ is secure in the Godhead and the Father's love. Paul uses the phrase "in Christ" quite often in his letters – someone counted and came up with 146 times! What does this mean?

We are united with Christ – because we are a chosen people, a royal priesthood of believers and because we are adopted into the family of God as His sons and daughters. We were chosen before we were born – verse 4 says "For he chose us **in him** before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight." We are a chosen people and disciples are given power and authority to do what Jesus did and say what he says. John 14:12-14 *Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.* What does this mean and how does it apply us when we find ourselves weak and feeble, with so many unanswered prayers? Do we really believe that we are brothers and sisters of Jesus with the same authority he has? Jesus says that those who believe in him **will**

do the works he does. He says “will do” not “might do” or “could do” but “will do”. Jesus promises the disciples power to do what he does.

Acts 1:8 *“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”*

Do we feel that we have this power? Rather do we actually believe and know that we have this power? The apostles had it, Paul had it, and many in history and even today have it because they are doing what Jesus did. Why aren’t we doing it? The answer is that we are probably unaware of how to use the power and authority we have been given and have neglected to find out why because we don’t see much evidence of this in the church.

We need to know what authority believers have and why they seem to think they don’t have it. Whenever doubt about the Word of God enters your mind, who is behind this doubt? Is it your own mind that decides some part of God’s Word isn’t true because its promise isn’t happening or is that doubt influenced from outside by the views of others around you or by the world’s scepticism about the Word of God. By the world’s scepticism, we mean the prince of this world’s desire to steer all mankind away from the truth of God’s Word.

Let’s go back to the beginning when Lucifer was an angel. When God created Adam and Eve in his image he gave them dominion of all the earth (Genesis 1:27-28). Man was given unconditional authority over all the earth and Lucifer didn’t like that because he hadn’t got that authority, and that jealousy made him decide to gain that power through mankind by deceiving Eve first and then Adam. As soon as that happened and the knowledge of good and evil was gained, Lucifer became Satan. Adam and Eve relinquished their authority over the earth when they were deceived and handed it over to Satan, who is the prince of this world and who has followers everywhere. Ephesians 6:12-13 *For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armour of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.*

What every believer has is authority to resist the devil so that he will flee from us. Notice he will flee from us, not from Jesus because the victory has been won already by him. The devil isn’t fleeing from God directly; he is seeking with his wiles, deceptions and lies to cast doubt on the authority God gives us who have faith. One of the ways we fail to get answers is by not taking authority in the name of Jesus.

We are all familiar with the passage from Mark 11:22-25 telling the mountain to move. *“Have faith in God,” Jesus answered. “Truly I tell you, if anyone says to this mountain, ‘Go, throw yourself into the sea,’ and does not doubt in his heart but believes that what he says will happen, it will be done for him. Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that*

you have received it, and it will be yours. And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive them, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins.

What does this passage reveal? The first thing is to have faith in God. Secondly, speak to what needs attention. Thirdly, believe it will happen and do not doubt. Too often we pray to God to do something, rather than praying for what we want to happen using the authority we have in Christ. When Jesus spoke to the fig tree, angry that it had no fruit even though it had leaves, (figs are on fig trees with leaves, and not on fig trees without leaves) it was dried up the next day (Mark 11). When Jesus spoke to the storm, it calmed. When Jesus spoke to the cripple he was healed. Jesus had God's authority to speak words which enabled what he asked to happen. So we need to speak to the issue or problem ourselves taking up the authority we have been given, rather than asking God to do something he gave us authority to deal with.

When we pray, do we attempt to tell God our problems? He already knows them, so complaining to God will just annoy God who knows the solution: use the authority given to you to sort out the problem. The power of God is released through words. Speak to the problem, speak to the issue, speak to the illness, speak to the need, and speak to the negative stuff that surrounds us by rebuking it and telling it not to touch us.

Now let's look at intercession. We don't have authority to make people do things we want or God wants, which is most importantly that they are saved. What we can do is praise God and remind him that His Word says he is not willing that any perish but all come to repentance. Jesus wants people to be saved and uses us to make the Word of God known to others. The Holy Spirit convicts and draws people to God. John 6:44 *"No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them, and I will raise them up at the last day."* So when we pray for family, pray for friends, pray for those who rule us, and those who rule over other nations, what should we pray? We may well have spoken about Jesus to family and friends, and if there has been no repentance, we pray that other labourers will cross their paths with the Gospel, while continuing to share the Gospel when the time is right. The same applies to those we don't know personally like those who rule us and other nations. We pray they hear the Gospel and respond to its message.

So what is the conclusion to this? Many believe that God is sovereign and so controls what goes on in the world. All the evidence points to the opposite: that evil prevails throughout the world. Why do so many ask "why does God allow bad stuff to happen"? God has delegated authority to believers and by ignoring this it's not God letting the devil ruin people's lives. It's us! If we know the truth, any deception, any falsehood and any lie loses its power. What Satan stole from Adam and Eve has been taken back by Jesus through his death, burial and resurrection. After that he gave His authority to us. That is why we are in Christ clothed in his righteousness and a dwelling place for Holy Spirit. Whenever we ignore who we are in Christ, we lose the power and authority we should have as adopted sons and daughters of God. Doubt and worldly desires constantly drive us away from God unless we exercise the discipline

to seek his presence and his truth in our daily walk. Faith is a gift of God. All of us need faith that what the Word of God says applies to us does actually apply to us and not someone more exalted, better trained or more knowledgeable than we are. All believers have the same authority – from the humblest to the most exalted because we are adopted into God's family. We need to take up the shield of faith to ward off the continual barrage of arrows from the evil one, and wield the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God. God spoke and created what he spoke to. Jesus spoke and lives were changed. So too when we under the guidance of the Spirit speak words of truth they can change lives, they can change situations and move mountains. Let's pray.