

Exercise your power and authority by faith

Deuteronomy 18:15-20, Mark 1:21-28

To have power and authority is an attractive temptation for nearly every person. If Satan might lure us, he would use this bait: "All power and authority I will give you, if you bow down and worship me." Human history is full of power struggles. It is the history striving for and losing power. There is an old saying that "power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely." But there is also good power and authority in God's world.

There are many symbols of power in our day. Some people see a high-ranking military uniform as a symbol of power. Others see money or wealth as a symbol of power. Some see physical strength as a symbol of power. Yet others see a top position in government as a symbol of power. And another may see a prestigious academic degree as a symbol of power. These are all symbols of visible power that many people would pursue in their lives.

There are two kinds of power in the world – visible and invisible power. For example, when we see a train pulling 100 cars over a bridge, we can only see the power of the locomotive. But there is also invisible power in the form of the bridge, which supports the heavy weight of the train and keeps it from falling. That is invisible power. The power which God bestows upon us is the invisible power in the Gospel.

There is another type of invisible power in God's world. Most visible powers are destructive, rather than constructive. They kill rather than give life. Most people have a strong fear of the power to kill. But the power of living is greater than that of killing. Jesus exercised the power of living, and did so publicly. The power of resurrection was the most amazing power that His disciples witnessed.

Saint Paul introduces us to the idea of the Gospel as power. In Romans 1:16, he proclaims, "I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes." In the original Greek, Saint Paul uses the word "Dunamis", which means dynamite, for "power". In the Gospel, he sees the power of dynamite. In the Gospel, the Word of God, and in Christ, in truth, in our faith, and in love, there is dynamite power.

Many people implicitly give authority to those who have knowledge. But knowledge in itself is not power or authority when the knowledge is proved to be ignorance. Socrates, that great Greek philosopher, once identified three types of ignorance: those who have no knowledge, those who have incorrect knowledge, and finally, those who recognize that they know nothing. Among the three types, he said, the only wisdom is in knowing you know nothing. Actually, people who fall into the second category may be the worst, because they do not know that they are ignorant.

Sometimes, having no knowledge is better than having incorrect knowledge. In our

world today, false knowledge can lead people to destruction. One case in point is the economic policy of the previous administration. Therefore, we should not boast of our knowledge, because we cannot be sure whether our knowledge is true or false. Our faith, also cannot depend on our knowledge about God, but rather on our relationship with God.

Today's scripture lesson is from the Mark 1:21-28. When Jesus began to teach at the synagogue the people were amazed at his teaching, because he taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law. They watched Him exercise the power to bring alive, to build up, and to cast out evil spirits.

Among the people, there was a man who was possessed by a demon. Recognizing Jesus as the Holy One of God, the demon cried out in consternation, "What have we to do with thee?" Jesus said to it, "Silent!" And then the unclean spirit came out of the man.

Knowing Jesus is not same as believing in Jesus. Even the demon knew who Jesus was. When we study the Bible, therefore, it is not to pursue knowledge about God, but to get to know God personally. Believing in God is more powerful than knowing about God. Our spiritual power and authority comes from believing in God. I would encourage you to exercise the power and authority by faith: the power of love, of truth, and of prayer.

First, the love casts out the evil power. "God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him." (1John 4:16-18) There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. Love is an invisible power hidden in the Christian faith. Jesus only had to speak to the possessed man, "Be quiet!"

My daughter, Esther who was here last Sunday, is working as a member of the Alternative Defending Council in the state of Colorado. Prior to that, she was a public defender in Trinidad, Colorado. As a public defender, her job was to help defend in court those who cannot hire their own attorney. Most of her clients were in jail.

She told me about one client who had killed an elderly man. This client was a young man. When she first visited him, he cried and wondered aloud why he had killed an innocent man who had helped him. He couldn't understand himself. But he also seemed to be repentant. At that first visit, he did not seem to be a bad person. She started to research ways to help defend him.

Meanwhile, the young defendant made another murder attempt while in jail. After that incident, Esther was advised not to visit him alone, because he was very dangerous. But she did visit him again and found that he was not mentally stable. She called for a psychiatrist to take him to a detention center.

The interesting part of the story is this. The young man, the alleged murderer, spoke to his psychiatrist about my daughter Esther: "You know the young lady? I know that she must be the boss of the evil one, because I couldn't do any harm to her. She had a

stronger evil than me.” The young murderer recognized her as a strong woman. And do you know why? Esther is a Christian. She has a Christian spirit. She loves to help people. There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear.

Don't fear anyone, because you have the power to control your enemy. Saint Augustine once said, “Love and then do whatever you want to do.” It is very easy to misunderstand. But when we love someone truly, we cannot treat that person lightly.

Second, the truth in Christ frees us from the burdens of the world. Deciding what to choose is always a burden in our lives. Choose the truth in any circumstance. Then you will be free from your burdens. To believe in God means to carry out his commands. "And his commands are not burdensome, for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith" (1 John 5: 3-5)

Be honest in God. Be honest to God. To be honest is a prayer. The Psalmist prayed, "Search me, O God, and know my heart, test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." (Psalm 139:23-24)

Don't tell a lie! To be honest is the power of truth. Be encouraged by choosing truth. Exercise your power of truth by the authority of truth, and then your enemy will step back away from you.

Last week, I heard from a woman who was a parishioner at my prior church. She had just learned that her granddaughter had been chosen to be a secretary in the West Wing of the White House. She was so proud that her granddaughter had been chosen by President Obama. She was looking for someone who can share her joy and wanted to share her joy with me. Clearly, her new job will be a prestigious and powerful position.

There was once a man whose life's ambition was to become a general in the Army. He imagined all the attention he would get: everybody saluting him, somebody to drive him around, all the perks of that high rank. One day he reached his goal, and he was promoted to brigadier general. He moved into his new office, sat behind his big desk, and felt the power emanating from that office.

His aide walked in, saluted him, and said, "Sir, there's a man here to see you." The general said, "Send him right in." The general began to swell with pride, thinking that he had arrived at this place on his own. He thought, "I'm going to impress this visitor with how important I am and how much power I have."

So, just as the visitor walked in, the general grabbed his phone and pretended that he was talking to the president of the United States. He said, "Mr. President, I understand your position on this. Just trust me, and I will handle that for you. I have a good idea about how to get that done, and I will share it with the Secretary of Defense when I see him tomorrow. Thank you for calling. Goodbye, Mr. President."

The general hung up the phone, turned around, and saw an ordinary soldier standing there. The general barked at him, "As you can see, Private, I'm a very busy man, but is there anything I can do for you?" The soldier said, "Nothing, sir. I'm just here to hook up your phone." False pride, arrogant pride can be devastating to our souls. Even if you don't have visible power in the world, hold the Truth of our Lord Christ that is the power and authority to overcome the world.

Lastly, prayer is the power given to those who are weak in faith. Paul boasts about his sufferings. He confessed, "If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness." When he prayed three times for his suffering being taken away, he heard the Lord's saying, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." He affirmed his faith, "For when I am weak, then I am strong." (2 Cor 12:10)

Prayer is a gift to those who are weak in faith. If we are not weak we do not pray often. Jesus taught and encouraged us to pray. "I tell you the truth, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there' and it will move."

Praying is claiming our right to ask something of God. Jesus taught us: "You may ask me for anything in my name, I will do it." (John 14:14) If you were in an accident and totaled your car, what would you do? I would submit a claim to my insurance company for the damages. Likewise, praying is claiming God's promise to us.

Saint Paul encourages us to exercise the power and authority by faith. "Examine yourselves to see whether you are in faith; test yourselves. Do you realize that Christ Jesus is in you - unless, of course, you fail the test? And I trust that you will discover that we have not failed the test. Now we pray to God that you will not do anything wrong." (2 Cor 13:5-7)

You also have a right to proclaim. Scripture said, "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because He has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." (Luke 4:18-19)

The power of Love will cast out your fear. Love people and bestow them with the love that the Lord showed us. The power of Truth will free you from oppression. Encourage them by the truth that you believe. And the power of Prayer will protect you from the consequences of evil. Your prayer will bring changes in many ways

Affirm your faith and make a commitment to exercise your power and authority by faith. Go and practice your power and authority of Love, of Truth and of Prayer.