

# Spiritual Authority and the Things We Love.

by Francis Frangipane

*While the doctrines of Christianity can be taught, Christ likeness can only be inspired. This next generation of leaders will by their humble and holy lives inspire multitudes. They will truly walk in Christ's love; they will be granted great authority.*

## Authority to Make Disciples

There are many administrators but few examples of Christ; many teachers but few who walk as Jesus walked. Indeed, while many stand in leadership today, not many function in Christ's authority.

However, a new level of authority is coming to the church. The Holy Spirit is about to crown God's servants with anointed spiritual authority; it will bring healing and deliverance on a scale unprecedented since the first century. In fact, God's promise is that in some cases entire cities will taste salvation.

Spiritual authority is nothing less than God Himself confirming our words with His power. The examples in the Scriptures are plain: Those who are raised up by God are backed up by God. They will "decree a thing and it will be established" (Job 22:28). As He did for Samuel, the Lord will let none of their words fall to the ground, for their words and their authority will be a manifestation of the living God Himself.

Yet why is there so little true spiritual authority in the church today? The answer lies partly in the fact that the authority of the church has been delegated to it, given only to carry out the purposes of God, and not to accomplish man-made programs and traditions. What are God's purposes? Jesus said, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations" (Matt. 28:18-19).

Christ gave the church authority to make disciples, not merely converts. In our day, many are believers in Jesus, but few are followers of Him. How do we make disciples? Jesus answers that for us: "teaching them to observe all that I commanded" (Matt. 28:19-20). When the church returns to teaching all that Jesus taught, our disciples will have authority to do all that Jesus did.

This new level of authority is not something we possess merely because we strive for it. We cannot buy it as Simon the magician attempted to do (see Acts

8:18). The power of authority will not function simply because we copy the methods of another, as the sons of Sceva realized (Acts 19:14); nor can it be attained automatically because we read books about building the church. We cannot pretend to have spiritual authority. There are, however, divinely ordained ways for us to minister in Christ's authority.

### **Authority to Lay Down Our Lives**

From the beginning of our salvation we have enjoyed the Father's unconditional love. As we mature, however, there comes a time when the Father's love toward us seems conditional. As it was for Christ, so it is for those who follow Him. He said, "For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life" (John 10:17). Jesus lived in the deepest intimacies of the Father's love because He laid down His life for the sheep. If we will grow in true authority, we will do so by laying down our lives for His sheep.

Have you felt the drawing, the divine working of the Father bringing you into Christlike surrender? Be encouraged; He is equipping you for this next outpouring of His Spirit. But also be advised: Your authority will be an outgrowth of your life laid down in love.

Perhaps we have been misled in our understanding of what spiritual authority is and where it comes from. We do not move in true spiritual authority simply because we hold a position in the church. Here is the path to true spiritual authority: The Holy Spirit delivers us from our fears and restores to us the possession of our souls. Then, without being intimidated by the enemy or manipulated by the influence of man, we choose to lay down our lives in obedience to God. Yes, in full freedom, with avenues of escape plainly within our grasp, we fearlessly surrender our souls to the Almighty. No one controls us but God, yet our lives are laid down, like Christ's, for the sins of men.

When we could easily fight and win, yet turn the other cheek; when we are unjustly opposed, yet quietly endure--at those moments spiritual authority is entering our lives.

"No man has taken [My life] away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative" (John 10:18). Jesus was not forced to accept crucifixion; He chose crucifixion. Christ's Gethsemane prayer was not an entreaty to escape the cross, for while Jesus was still in the garden, He told Peter, "Do you think that I cannot appeal to My Father and He will at once put at My disposal more than twelve legions of angels?" (Matt. 26:53)

Jesus had a choice: legions of warring angels and immediate personal deliverance, or death on the cross and deliverance for the world. He chose to die. The willful decision to lay down our lives as Jesus did is the very path upon which true authority develops. Jesus said, "I have authority to lay [My life] down" (John 10:18). His authority came in the laying down of His life. Our

authority comes from the same source: picking up our cross and laying down our lives.

### **Authority, Not Control**

Spiritual authority is the power and provision of God to invade and transform the temporal with the power of the eternal. It is not something our flesh can imitate, nor is it found in the tone of our words or the gaze of our eyes. Divine authority requires divine sanction. This sanction comes from passing the tests of love.

When authority is administered without love, it degenerates into control. God does not call us to control His people but to inspire and guard them. The outcome of control is oppression, witchcraft and strife. But the result of love is liberty and the power to build up and protect God's people.

In spiritual authority there is no control involved, nor is any needed. Our lives, and the lives of those who follow us are laid down, like Christ's, on our own initiative. It is a choice born out of love. Since true authority itself is born in freedom, freedom is what it breeds.

We will walk in either the true authority of love, the false authority of control or no authority at all. Both false authority and no authority are rooted in fear, and we react to fear in either of two ways. The first reaction, which produces false authority, is to seek to control those around us, thus making the circumstances around us more predictable and less threatening. The other response to fear is to refuse to accept and exercise any authority at all. Many relationships are simply the pairing of these symbiotic needs: the desire to control and the willingness to be controlled. Both are fuelled by overreactions to fear.

The Scripture tells us, however, "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear" (1 John 4:18). Since true authority is built upon love, its goal is to liberate, not dominate. Therefore, before one can truly move in spiritual authority he must be delivered from fear and its desire to control; he must be rooted and grounded in love.

### **Authority to Inspire Christ likeness**

When our teaching about God and our obedience to Him are one, spiritual authority accompanies our lives. Jesus astounded the multitudes, for He spoke "as one having authority" (Matt. 7:28-29). What He taught was consistent with how He lived. Therefore, we also must live and display the virtue we seek to teach.

If we seek to train our church to pray, we ourselves must first be intercessors. You may say, But, out of a congregation of several hundred, only three people join me

for prayer. Then those three are the individuals you are truly touching. Do not be discouraged, for you will win others. But the measure of our success is not the numbers in attendance Sunday mornings. God has given us people so we may train them, not merely count them. Of this group those whom we inspire to live like Christ are actually the measure of our success, the test of our effectiveness in the ministry.

You may say, But I've never been a leader. When anyone lays down his or her life in Christ's love, others will see and follow. Such a one can speak with confidence and penetration, whether pastor, housewife or child.

This next generation will not just teach the people; they will inspire the body of Christ to live like Jesus. Their example in all things will awaken godliness in those around them. From true virtue shall the leaders of tomorrow draw true authority, for when the nature of Christ is revealed, the authority of Christ soon follows.

### **Authority Born From Love**

As wide as our sphere of love is, to that extent we have spiritual authority. We see this in the mother who loves her child. Such a woman has authority to protect, train and nurture her offspring. She has authority to protect what she loves. The same is true of the husband over his family. His authority is not merely to rule but to establish his home in the life of Christ. True spiritual authority is born of love.

The individuals who love their local church have authority to build up that church. Their authority is not extended, however, beyond the boundaries of their love. If we love the entire body of Christ in a locale, our authority touches the lives of those in our city or region, either through the burden of prayer or through teaching or service.

The testing ground of all spiritual things is love, for love alone purifies our motives and delivers us from the deceitfulness of self. Even authority in warfare must be rooted in love. David gained the skills to slay Goliath, not on a battlefield, but by defending his father's sheep from vicious predators. He loved the sheep so much that he would even risk his life for them. So also we grow in authority as we protect our Father's sheep, the flock He has given us to love.

Authority is muscle in the arm of love. The more one loves, the more authority is granted to him. If we love our cities and are willing to lay down our lives for them, God will enlarge our hearts, granting us authority to confront principalities and powers.

However, no man should ever engage in confrontational warfare who does not love what he has been called to protect. If you do not love your city, do not pray against the ruling forces of darkness. Satan knows the genuineness of our love by

the brightness of the glory which surrounds us. A man without Christlike love will soon shrink back and fail in spiritual warfare.

Therefore, in His mercy God restrains most Christians from understanding the doctrines of our authority in spiritual warfare. For there are many things He has to say which we are not able to hear until the base of our love is expanded. In His love He protects us from presumptuously attacking the strongholds of hell and suffering loss. Yet, if we are truly anointed in God's love, the price to see our cities saved is not too great, for it is the price love always pays: the willingness to die for what we care for.

### **Authority to Build Up the Body of Christ**

"For even if I should boast somewhat further about our authority, which the Lord gave for building you up and not for destroying you" (2 Cor. 10:8). Many so-called "prophets" today think they are called, like Jeremiah, to "pluck up and to break down, to destroy and to overthrow" (Jer. 1:10). Jeremiah's message was to a people who were destined to be carried off into Babylon. He spoke to a people who did not have the Holy Spirit and the blood of Jesus, a nation of whom God Himself said was destined for captivity (see Jer. 12:7).

The whole commission of Jeremiah, though, was more than confronting sin. It also included promises of restoration and deliverance, "to build and to plant" (Jer. 1:10). To represent the heart of the Lord, which is the true prophetic role, the servant of God must know if the Holy Spirit is preparing to destroy or seeking to rebuild.

Today we are a people coming out of captivity, a people whom God is encouraging to build, as they did in the days of Nehemiah, Ezra, Haggai and Zechariah. We have been in exile from the promises of God, but we are returning to rebuild the Lord's house. It is not a time to tear down the body of Christ; it is time to establish and to build up.

The authority coming to the church in this next outpouring will be an authority to restore the local, city wide church. Like Paul's authority, ours will be given for building and encouraging and not for destroying.

God has this new leadership constantly before His eyes. Pastors from many denominations, along with their congregations, are meeting together in prayer, seeking to draw the very fire and heart of God into their souls. Emerging from this foundation of humility and prayer is a new authority to make disciples of Christ. Because their love encompasses the entire city, their authority reaches even into the heavenly places. They are beginning to impact the spiritual atmosphere of their cities; in many cases, they are becoming effective against the principalities and powers ruling there. These are the leaders whom God is raising up, whom He will back up with His power.

**Dear Lord, make me a willing sacrifice. I desire Your authority, Lord. Give me courage to surrender in obedience, even when I do not see the outcome and when all I see is loss. Help me to trust as I walk through the narrow gate. Establish in me Your love that I might defend Your people with authority. In Jesus' name. Amen.**