

The Spiritual Man: Authority

by Stephen Kaung

God wants man, not babies, and a spiritual man is a man with authority, given for the building up of the body of Christ.

Duration: 56:55

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 10:3

Topics: "Spiritual Growth", "Christian Maturity"

Description

The video is a sermon on the book of Second Corinthians. It is divided into four sections: spiritual life, spiritual ministry, spiritual giving, and the spiritual man. The speaker emphasizes that God desires spiritual men, not just individuals like Paul. The last four chapters of Second Corinthians highlight the reaction of Paul as a spiritual man under pressure, showing that his actions reflect Christ rather than himself. The speaker encourages the audience to examine their own spirituality by how they react in difficult situations.

Transcript

Please turn to 2nd Corinthians chapter 10. 2nd Corinthians chapter 10. We'll read the first eight verses.

2nd Corinthians chapter 10 verse 1. And I myself, Paul, entreat you by the meekness and gentleness of the Christ, who has the appearance when present and mean among you, but absent and bold towards you. But I beseech that present I may not be bold with the confidence with which I think to be daring towards some who think of us as walking according to flesh. For walking in flesh we do not war according to flesh, for the arms of our warfare are not fleshly, but powerful according to God, to the overthrow of strongholds, overthrowing reasonings and every high thing that lift itself up against the knowledge of God, and leading captive every thought into the obedience of the Christ.

And having in readiness to avenge all disobedience, when your obedience shall have been fulfilled. Do we look at what concerns appearance? If anyone has confidence in himself that he is of Christ, let him think this again in himself, that even as he is of Christ, so also are we. For and if I should boast even somewhat more abundantly of our authority which the Lord has given to us for building up and not for your overthrowing, I shall not be put to shame.

May we look to the Lord in prayer. Our Father, we do praise and thank Thee that we may gather in Thy presence to hear Thy word. We just ask, O Lord, that Thou will open our ears and our hearts to Thy voice.

We pray that as Thy word is given, that Thou may speak to our heart, and Thou may do the work which Thou has been and are doing in the midst of Thy people, that Thy name may be honored and glorified. We commit this time into Thy hands and trust Thee in the name of our Lord Jesus. Amen.

Some time ago we were in this second letter to the Corinthians, and I wonder whether we remember anything. We know that this second letter to the Corinthians is a very unique book. Why? Because it is considered as Paul's autobiography.

Here we find a man in Christ, and this man in Christ is characterized by spirituality. In 1 Corinthians we find that the church in Corinth is characterized by carnality, but in 2 Corinthians we find this man is mocked with spirituality. So if you want to take the whole book of 2 Corinthians, you may roughly put it this way.

In the first and second chapters you find spiritual life being explained to us. From chapter 3 to chapter 7 you find spiritual ministry is defined, and from chapter 8 to chapter 9 you have spiritual giving. That is, when people give, it is really a spiritual thing, because Paul calls it grace and blessing.

And then the last four chapters, from chapter 10 to chapter 13, you find the spiritual man. Now in the past we have fellowship a little bit on what spiritual life is, on what spiritual ministry is, and I remember long time ago we did enter into this matter of spiritual giving, so we will not go back to that again, and God willing we will like to continue on with the last four chapters in 2 Corinthians. Now the last four chapters in 2 Corinthians is the spiritual man.

Now of course dear brothers and sisters, if you read a biography, you will find a biography is usually composed of two things, life and service, or ministry. Now in 2 Corinthians so usually when you read a biography you find out what is mentioned in that book is concerning his life and concerning his work, or his ministry, because a biography is mainly composed of these two things. Now we have already touched upon life and touched upon ministry, but there is so much more in Paul, that you find in the last four chapters, something more is being mentioned concerning that man in Christ, that spiritual man.

First of all you will find it is said, I know a man in Christ. Now brothers and sisters let us remember that what God wants is man. God is not after angels, nor is he after spirits.

God wants man. In the very beginning God created man according to his own image. God made man with the capacity for God.

That God may dwell in man and be united with man. That man may manifest the glory of God. But Adam sinned.

Even after Adam sinned, you will find God did not give up man. He came to the garden of Eden and said, Adam, where are you? That is man, where are you? God has been and he is still finding man. Because that is God's original purpose.

God wants man. But man after his own heart. And when you read the Old Testament, you find in the Old Testament here and there, God found some man.

We find some glimpses of the man that God is after. In Abel, in Enoch, in Noah, in Abraham, in Isaac, in Jacob, in Joseph, in Moses, in David, in Daniel, and in all these people in the Old Testament, you find glimpses of the man that God is really after. But all these men are but parts and fragments of the man that

God really has in heart.

It is not until we come to the end of the world in the New Testament, then we find the man of God's own heart. Even our Lord Jesus Christ. And that is the reason why you find in the New Testament, when our Lord Jesus was on earth, the heavens were opened again and again and again and said, this is my beloved son, in whom is my delight.

I am well pleased. I am really satisfied. God has found his man in Christ.

But this man is a corporate man. Our Lord Jesus is not only a personal man. Our Lord Jesus is a corporate man.

He is not just a man. He is the federal head of a new mankind. That is why you find through the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus, God is able to bring into Christ many men patterned after him.

The new man, corporately speaking. A man in Christ, individually speaking. And that is what God is really after.

So, first of all, brothers and sisters, let us remember that what God is really looking for is man. He wants us to be man. The man according to God's own heart.

Not angels. Often times you want to be angels. Not spirits.

He does not want spirits. He wants man. Human.

And yet, divine. We are human beings. And yet we have divine life in us.

And the divine life in us has so transformed us, that his divine life may be expressed through this human life. And this is what God really wants. Now, number two.

God wants us to be man. And God wants man. That is to say, God's desire is not for babies.

His desire is for grown-ups. Of course we have to begin with babies. But God's ultimate purpose is manhood.

Not babies. In Corinthian, in the church in Corinth, you find there are many babies there. Now there is a place or there is a time for babyhood.

Paul said, when I was with you, I treated you as children, as babes in Christ. And that's what it ought to be. But after so many years, Paul said, I still have to treat you as babes in Christ.

Why? Because you have not grown up. God wants man. Not just babies.

After we are born again, after we have gone through a period of babyhood, we ought to grow into maturity. Grown-ups. And that is what you find in Ephesians chapter four.

That we may arrive, we may all arrive at the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God. At the full grown man. At the fullness of the stature of Christ.

That we be not babes tossed about by every wind of doctrine. In manish, be babies. But in minds, be grown-up.

We need to stand up like man. Grown-up, mature, God in Christ. When you go into the Old Testament, you find when God commanded Moses to build a tabernacle, it was built with curtains.

But these curtains were supported by boards. And in Exodus chapter twenty-six, you find these boards were made of acacia wood. Strong wood.

And they were of ten cubits high. And one and half cubits wide. And the Bible says they stood up.

Standing up. These boards stood up to bear the, to become the frame of the tabernacle. There is responsibility there.

And that's the reason why they had to stand up. Of course we know ten speaks of responsibility. Now why is it one and half cubits? It shows that any one board is not complete in itself.

You have to be joined together with another board. And that is the reason why you have to have them. But anyway you'll find what God really desires is man.

Grown-up. Matured in Christ Jesus. We cannot remain in babyhood all the time.

Now baby, we all like babies. Because they are so innocent. But if after a number of years, and they still remain as babies, then something must be wrong.

Now we should be childlike, but certainly we should not be childish. If we continue to be childish like babies, then it really hurt the heart of the parents. So secondly you'll find God wants men.

Grown-ups. And that is the reason why we have to grow in grace. We have to grow in the knowledge of Jesus Christ.

We have to grow in faith. We have to grow in experience of our Lord Jesus. And not just remain as when we were first saved.

Number three. God wants men. God wants grown-up.

God wants men in Christ. Not just any kind of men. But God wants men and women in Christ.

Not in Adam. Not in ourselves. But in Christ.

By God we are put in Christ. And Christ has become our wisdom, righteousness and holiness and redemption. A man in Christ is a man.

Who is filled with Christ. Christ has become his life. Christ is his Alpha and his Omega.

Christ has been formed in him. And that's the reason why when people come in touch with that man, they come in touch with Christ. Because he is a man in Christ.

And Christ is being expressed through that man. And this is the kind of man that God is really after. Dear brothers and sisters, the Corinthian believers are men in Adam.

Even though they are saved and yet in their daily life, their condition is such that they are still dwelling in Adam. And that's the reason why you find what they express either in their individual life or in their life together is Adamic in nature. Adam.

It is natural. It is carnal. But here is a man called Paul.

And this man is a man in Christ. And whatever is expressed through that man, you find it is not Paul. It is Christ.

This is the man that God is really after. You know brothers and sisters, we do not really know a person until that person is put under pressure. You know in ordinary days, when there is no pressure, when nothing is happening, everybody can be very spiritual.

Or at least can appear very spiritual. But it is when we are put under pressure, we are put under pressure. Then the reality of what we are begin to appear.

Whether we are a man in Christ, spiritual, or whether we are still carnal, you find it is manifested in our reaction. And that is the reason why the last four chapters of 2 Corinthians are so precious. Why? Because in the last four chapters, you find a man, Paul.

He is put under tremendous pressure. That is the reason why some commentators think that 2 Corinthians is Paul's defense of his apostolic authority. In other words, here in Corinth are some people who doubt the apostleship of Paul.

There are some people who oppose Paul in such a way that they try to put him down and even deny that he is an apostle. And Paul is thus put under tremendous pressure. But when such pressure is put upon Paul, brothers and sisters, you notice how he reacts.

A reaction will tell what kind of a person you are. The Corinthian believers think that they are dealing with a baby. They despise Paul.

They think nothing of Paul. They say when Paul was in our midst, his demeanor was mean. He was nobody.

They thought they were dealing with a baby. But, if you read the last four chapters of 2 Corinthians, you find they met a man. Paul is not a baby in Christ.

He is a man in Christ. And what a man he is. Even though he has authority and yet he said, I plead with you with the meekness and gentleness of Christ.

Paul is a man. Yet on the other hand you find he is bold as a lion. He is not weak at all.

If you read the last four chapters, you find these words, the meekness and the gentleness of Christ, powerful before God, the obedience of Christ, the truth of Christ, the power of Christ. You find Christ. You do not find Paul really.

His reaction is Christ. His reaction to pressure is Christ. It is not Paul himself.

And in this respect, you realize what a spiritual man he is. Dear brothers and sisters, how do we measure Christ? How do we measure Christ? How do we measure our spirituality? Not in peaceful days, but when we are under pressure. When we are being misunderstood.

When we are being attacked. When we are being neglected. Or when something is done to us.

How do we react? Is our reaction speaks of Christ? Is Christ? Or our reaction speaks of ourselves? That is the way to show our spirituality. Or to reveal, expose our carnality. So in these last four chapters, you find that when Paul is under tremendous pressure, he reacts as a man in Christ.

And he is a man in Christ. When we do not see Paul, we see Christ in all his reaction. And I do look to the Lord that it may be true with all of us.

Now these last four chapters shows us what a spiritual man really is. Now this morning, probably we will just touch upon one point. And maybe God willing, later on we can touch upon the other points.

Now first of all you find a spiritual man is a man with authority. Now dear brothers and sisters, we are not very happy with the word authority. We are afraid of authority.

We think that authority is the opposite of freedom. We want to be free. And thank God we are free.

We are free because we are free in Christ Jesus. But in our mentality, we always put authority and freedom at opposite poles. We think that if there is freedom, then it should be free for all.

And no authority, no order whatsoever. Everyone just do what he or she thinks best. It is just a matter like we find in the last sentence of the book of Judges.

Every man does what is good in his own eyes because there is no king. And king is authority. When there is no authority, then everyone does what he sees best.

Free for all. And when this is the case, you find there is no order, you find there is no unity, you find there is no strength, you find there is no building up. The whole nation at that time was scattered, weak, oppressed, open to assaults of the enemy.

Why? Because there is no king. There is no authority. We think that when authority comes in, freedom goes out.

But dear brothers and sisters, probably this is true with worldly authority. But certainly this is not true with spiritual authority. Why? Because there is nothing that builds the body of Christ more than authority.

Paul said, God gives me authority not for overthrowing, not for destroying, not for tearing down, but God gives me authority for the building up. In other words, authority is given for the purpose of building up the body of Christ. Where there is no authority, there is no building up.

How can you build if there is no authority? How can you put the stones together if there is no authority? If everyone wants to be king, how can you cement all these living stones together and build up into a three dimensional building? If there is no authority, all you have will be just a plane. Everybody equal and everybody does what he thinks is right. There will be no building at all.

Therefore, in the scripture, you find authority has a very large place in the body. Authority does not interfere with freedom. As a matter of fact, authority guarantees freedom.

Here is a man, a man in Christ. He is a man with authority. But what is authority? Spiritual authority is very different from worldly authority.

You remember when our Lord Jesus was on earth? Even among his few disciples, only twelve of them. And yet the twelve of them are always trying to manoeuvre to the place of authority. Of course, they dare not take the place of Christ.

But at least they want to be next to Christ. And for that reason, you will find throughout the three years when they are following the Lord, they are always struggling and fighting against each other, trying to manoeuvre to the next place to Christ. To his right hand and to his left hand.

Why? Because they think that authority is a matter of position. If they can get to a certain position, then they can have certain authority, and by authority it means they can rule over other people, overlord other people, give orders and commands, and they are above. Now that is the idea in this world.

And so far as the world is concerned, this is true. But the Lord Jesus said, this is not so among you. Among you, if you want to be the first, you should be the last.

If you want to be the head, then you must be the one who serves. Because he said, the Son of Man comes into this world not to be minister, but to minister to, and to give his life a ransom for many. In other words, spiritual authority is life, not position.

There is no authority but God. In Romans chapter 13 you find that all authority comes from God. There is no authority except from God.

To put it in another way, God is the authority of the universe. Why is he the authority of the universe? Because he created the universe. The whole universe belongs to him.

He is the owner of everything, therefore he has authority over all things. Our Lord Jesus has authority over all things. He has the first place in all things.

Why? Because all the fullness of the Godhead dwells in him bodily. He is the Redeemer, therefore he is the head of the new creation. He has authority over the new creation.

Why? Because he is the head. He is the Redeemer of the new creation. There is no authority but God.

There is no authority but Christ. If God should delegate his authority to any person, it is because he has given himself to that person. Authority is not something that you claim.

Authority is the someone that you are filled with. You cannot claim authority but if you are filled with Christ, there is authority vested in you. It is the measure of Christ in your life that is the measure of the authority delegated to you by God.

And that is the reason why all the members of the body of Christ have some authority in them. In Ephesians chapter 5, you know there is a portion we often read during marriage. Ephesians chapter 5 from verse 22 to 33, that is the portion we always read at marriage.

But, unfortunately we do not start with 21. Verse 21. Submit to one another in the fear of Christ, then wives, then husbands.

In other words, we need to submit to one another in the fear of Christ, as the body of Christ, as members of the body of Christ. Submit to one another. Every member has some of Christ in him or in her.

At least we are saved. We have Christ in us. Therefore you find everyone has a measure of Christ, however small it may be.

And because every member has a measure of Christ in him, therefore we have to submit to one another in the fear of Christ. When I submit to my brother, I submit to him because of Christ. In the fear of Christ.

That is to say, when I see Christ in him, I submit to the Christ that is in him. The Christ in him is the authority to me. And the same thing is true with you.

We submit to one another in the fear of Christ. We submit to one another not in the sense that it is to you or to me, but in the sense to Christ. It is Christ in you.

It is Christ in us that we submit to. Now if that is the case, submission is not that difficult. If only we can see Christ in our brothers and sisters, then we know whom we should submit to.

Sometimes Christ may be expressed through a little brother or little sister. And when that is the case, then the bigger members have to submit. But of course those bigger members that have a larger measure of Christ probably should be submitted to more by other people.

Why? Because Christ is more manifested in them. So first of all let us remember a spiritual man is not a person without authority. You cannot be a spiritual man if there is no authority.

But this authority is not something you grasp. This authority is something born, given to you. Because Christ is incorporated in your life to a larger measure.

It is Christ. Now let us remember, no matter how much God may delegate His authority to you, you are not an authority. Never.

You are just a channel for the authority of God. That does not make you an authority. When you become so foolish as to think, because you have been used by God, you have been given authority, therefore you are now authority.

You can do things by yourself. Dear brothers and sisters, that is your downfall. And that is the downfall of many of God's people throughout the centuries.

God used them before. God's authority was manifested in their lives before. But they became mad with the thought that they are not authorities.

And that's the end of it. We are never authorities. We are only channels of God's authority.

Without God there is no authority whatsoever. And of course God in us is measured by life. That is by the spiritual life in us.

How much authority of Christ is really incorporated in our life. And that measure of Christ is the measure of spiritual authority that is in us. I remember dear brother Watchman Lee said to us, he said when you go to the church, the first thing that you need to know, to learn, is to recognize authority.

Now think of it. As God's people come together, as a church, as a corporate body, the first thing that we need to know is to recognize authority. Whom should we submit to? The problem with God's people today, is God's people do not recognize authority.

We want democracy. Now democracy is good for the nation of this world. But the kingdom of God is a theocracy, not a democracy.

In the kingdom of God we cannot afford to be without authority. We have to know to learn to recognize authority. Probably the first thing you come to the church will be freedom.

You want freedom. You will find that in this world, in the organizations, you don't have freedom. In other words, there in the world no matter whether it is a company, or whether it is a home, or whether it is a school, there is authority there.

And you find you are being somewhat limited. Therefore you come to the church and you find that, you hope that in the church you can have freedom. You can do anything that you like.

Brothers and sisters, you come to the wrong place. Because if you come to the church, the first thing that you need to know is to recognize authority. You need to recognize Christ as the authority.

You have to put yourself under the headship of Christ. And then secondly, you have to submit yourself to your brothers and sisters as you see Christ in their lives. And it is only when we recognize authority, then you will find we are able to be built up together.

Authority is necessary for building up. I remember another brother said, there are two things that the church needs most. One is life, and the other is authority.

But of course we know life is authority, and authority is life. But look at Paul. Here is a man who has such a large measure of Christ in him.

Therefore he is a man with authority, apostolic authority. And yet you will find how reluctant he will use his apostolic authority. So far as an apostle is concerned, he can very easily exercise his apostolic authority over the Corinthian believers.

He said, if I am not an apostle to other people, at least I am not an apostle to you. Why? Because your very being Christ is because of me. Paul certainly is an apostle to the Corinthian believers.

He can order them, command them what they should do. But he said, I would rather persuade you. Therefore you will find in the beginning of the last four chapters, as Paul, some people say he is defending his apostolic authority.

The first thing he mentions is, by the meekness and the gentleness of Christ. Not the strength, the severity, but the meekness and the gentleness of Christ. You see how reluctant Paul is to use his apostolic authority.

Where there is authority, there will be restraint. Where there is no authority, then people like to use it. You know there is a very great difference between spiritual authority and to be authoritative.

Now we like to be authoritative, but to be authoritative is very different to have authority. To put it in another way, if you really have spiritual authority, you don't need to be authoritative. You must be authoritative, why? Because you have no authority and you try to make it look like you have.

Paul does not need to be authoritative. On the contrary you will find that he exercises it with great restraint, great reluctance. He says, I'm not going to use it.

I don't want to. Come with the severity of the authority that God has given to me, by the meekness of Christ. Dear brothers and sisters, those who have spiritual authority will exercise it with restraint.

But that should not be considered as weakness, because it can easily be misunderstood as weakness. That's how the Corinthian believers misunderstand Paul. They think Paul is weak.

Why? Because he is not authoritative. He is not commanding, demanding, but he pleads with meekness and gentleness of Christ. Spiritual authority comes by way of obedience.

You do not come to authority by striving and struggling. You come to authority by way of the cross. You remember what the Lord Jesus said to the two sons of Zebedee? He said, Are you able to drink the cup that I'm going to drink? Are you willing to be baptized with the baptism that I'm to be baptized with? You must drink the cup that I drink.

You must be baptized with the baptism that I'm baptized with. But to sit on my right and left is not for me to give, it's for my Father who is in heaven to give. In other words, the way to authority is by way of the cross.

The cup means the will of the Father. Obedience to the Father's will. The baptism is the cross.

So here you'll find the way to authority is by way of the cup, by way of the baptism, by way of the cross, by way of obedience. In Philippians chapter 2 you'll find that even though our Lord Jesus was equal with God, and there was not something to be grasped because He was God, He is God, and yet He emptied Himself. He took the form of a man, and He further humbled Himself, being obedient to the Father, even unto death, and death to death of the cross.

And because of that, the Father has highly exalted Him, and has given Him a name that is above every name, and to that name every knee shall bow, every tongue confess that Jesus is Lord. In other words, the place of authority. How does Christ come to the place of supreme authority? By way of obedience, by way of emptying, by way of humility, by way of... So the way to authority is by way of obedience.

Dear brothers and sisters, I we learn more how to obey one another, instead of trying to lord over one another, you will be given more authority from above. Furthermore, authority and love go together. In other words, authority must be exercised in love.

Look at Paul. He is a man full of authority, and yet how he is full of love. In these last four chapters you can see his love for the Corinthian believers.

He said, who is weak, and I am not weak. Who is stumbled, and I burn not. He said, I am willing to spend and be spent for you.

Even if the more I love you, the less I love, and yet I am willing to give myself for you completely. I am willing to see that you are strong, and I am weak. You are in honor, and I am in disgrace.

I am willing to do that. In other words, there is such love in Paul's heart, and when authority is exercised in love, it's very effective. Or may I put it in another way.

Love is authority. If there is love, there will be authority. Authority is not demanding, is not overloading.

Authority is to set an example. Authority is to serve, to minister. Authority is to give oneself for others.

And dear brothers and sisters, where there is love, you find authority is manifested. So here you find a man in Christ. He is a spiritual man.

He's a man with authority. But what kind of authority you find here. As you touch this authority, you touch Christ.

And because of this, if anyone should resist that authority, Paul said, there will be the severity there. It is a serious thing when we resist the authority of Christ. So this morning, I think I'll just share this much.

And that is, we need to recapture before God this matter of authority in the church. Never, never think that the church is a place where everyone can do just whatever he or she likes. Remember, the church is the place where we learn to recognize authority.

When we learn to submit to one another. When we learn to exercise authority in love. As a matter of fact, when things go on in the way that God wants it to be, or to put it another way, when the Spirit of God has His hand over His people, you'll find authority is hidden.

It is only when things go wrong that authority becomes manifest. Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. You have freedom.

You have liberty. And authority seems to be hidden. Why? Because the authority is there.

The authority of the Holy Spirit is there. But when people are not moving the Spirit, when there is out of order, then authority is manifest. So, when we are not moving the Spirit, this is the way you'll find in the scripture.

Now brothers and sisters, God wants grown-ups, men in Christ. He wants to see that there is spirituality there. That is Himself there.

And if He Himself is there, authority is there. And submission is there. And there you'll find God's people will really be built up together.

And each will fit in with the other according to the place that God has put. You remember Paul, even in chapter 11, chapter 10, yes, he mentioned this matter of the rule of measure. The rule of measure.

God has a rule. He has a measure. He measures to everyone a certain measure.

And we need to keep within our measure. And not to overstep it. So Paul said, I am not going beyond my measure.

And if everyone is kept within his measure, you'll find how we fit with one another. And this is authority. This is authority.

So may the Lord help us and lead us into true liberty when we recognize authority. Shall we pray? Our Heavenly Father, as we touch upon this matter, we ask that we may see it in the way that Thou seest it. That we may not take it in the sense of the worldly meaning.

But we may really see that Thou art the God of authority. Thou art the head of Thy church. And Thou has put Thy life and authority in the body.

Thou dost use that to build us up together, that we may be a corporate expression of Thyself. So Lord, we just ask Thee to have mercy upon us. That we may really recognize authority.

And we may really enter into the liberty that is of the Spirit. That we may be built up together instead of destroying each other. Amen.

We ask in the name of our Lord Jesus. Amen.

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