

Lions in the Daniel Den

By Bobby Schuller

I want to begin by encouraging you that God does not need you to be afraid, to be worried, that today you are confident and bold, and God is preparing in your heart a courage that is able to move beyond the things that you're afraid of. Whatever crisis it is that you're going through God has given you spiritual authority over the space in which you live. And I want to affirm in you that if you have put on Jesus Christ and if you're filled with the Holy Spirit, you have immense power inside of you, and I want to encourage you to release that power, that life, that goodness in the world in which you live. God needs you to be a reflection of the light of Jesus to the people in your world. We don't have time to be afraid, to be worried. With the time that God has given us, we will be bold. You will be strong and you're going to do great things for God because he's given you everything you need to accomplish the task that he's given you.

Are you going through a crisis? Are you going through a difficult time in your life? Have faith. You're going to be okay. This is our Father's world and he's given you authority over it. And that's what we're talking about today. Today is going to be a little bit of a me sermon. It's going to be one of those that's really more addressed to Christians. It's one that

we don't speak on a lot here and that is the importance of spiritual authority in God's good world, the world in which we live.

This is a secular principle I'm beginning with. That confidence, not being afraid to ask dumb questions, not being afraid to lead, not being able to sort of naively say I can do this even though I don't know how yet, it really is a good thing.

J.D. Rockefeller has a story. John Rockefeller was maybe the wealthiest man ever in history, depending on how you look at it. His personal wealth today would be about three hundred billion dollars. And there was this meeting where when John Rockefeller had a small oil refinery, and he wanted to meet with a little known guy name Cornelius Vanderbilt and he decided he was going to meet with Vanderbilt in a private meeting. And he was a deeply religious man. He was a Baptist, he faithfully went to church, he prayed every day, he believed that he had a call of God in his life. And when he was supposed to get on this train, he missed it by like a few seconds, he missed the train. And it was so close to getting on the train that they loaded his baggage but he didn't get on. And this train ended up being in a terrible wreck and it was called the Angola Horror because of this derailed train, a bunch of people died, almost everybody on the train died, and John Rockefeller lived.

And so as a part of his biography, they talk a lot about how this radically changed his life because he took this view that I was supposed to die and so it looked like this meeting with Vanderbilt, little did he know, was destiny. So his whole attitude into going into this meeting with Vanderbilt was completely different. It had a divine mantle on it in his own mind, do you know? The way he saw it was like God intended for this to happen. And you look at Rockefeller's life and you wonder if maybe God did intend for that to happen because out of that meeting came Rockefellers mega, mega oil company. And he gave most of that money away. He founded the University of Chicago, and he also began what's now viewed as sort of modern altruism where you have this big institutions that give huge grants to colleges and charities that has now been copied by the likes of Bill Gates and others.

I just want to begin by saying that I think confidence carries so much weight when it comes to having victory in our lives. And I see that very many Christians have this attitude that to be humble means almost like I have to worry, I have to be shy, I have to be ashamed, and I can't be confident. And I just want to encourage you that if anyone was to be confident, it's you. And it doesn't mean proud-ful. That you can be humbly confident, and I think Rockefeller was, in this instance. He was humbled by the fact that his life was spared.

And I just want to say to you, you have been given something very, very special. You've been given the Holy Spirit of God, and a divine calling. And I sincerely believe that if you're still alive, you're alive for a reason, even if you're in a hospital, even if it's your last day, I think there's a reason you have one more day. And I think it's because you have been given immense power. Jesus reaffirms this a lot when he talks about the importance of our faith. If only you had faith you could move mountains, and I believe that. I believe that if you release your faith, if you have faith, you can move mountains because you have spiritual authority.

Daniel 6 is a famous passage that was read today by my beautiful wife Hannah, as always. Great job, Hannah. Daniel was an old man when this happened. He had already had a reputation. And the Babylonian empire had been overcome by the Persian or Mede Empire, and this new King Darius loves Daniel. He thinks Daniel's the best. And he's going to put Daniel in charge of his whole kingdom. And when the other peers of Daniel find out about this, they become insanely jealous, and they decide that they're going to set a trap for Daniel because they can't find anything bad in his life to blackmail him with.

So they coordinate with the king that there will be this 30-day period where no one is allowed to pray to anyone except the king and the

king alone. And of course Daniel is this faithful man of prayer, right? He's always praying to Jerusalem, his windows are open, people can see this guy puts God first in his life.

And so Darius agrees to this trap, and in the Persian way, a king can't undo any decree, and so this decree is made and they catch Daniel and they say see, he prayed, as he always does three times a day to the God of Israel towards Jerusalem. And Darius is forced to throw Daniel in the lion's den.

And here we get to the title of this whole series. That space was not the lions, it was Daniel's. God had given, because of his personal friendship with God, and his prayer life, God had given to Daniel authority over that space. It was Daniel's den. I think Daniel trusted that God was in charge of that space, not King Darius. And that those lions belonged to God, and not to King Darius. And that God had put in Daniel's very body the power and authority to subdue that space and bring peace and life to it, and not death.

And I think that is an analogy for the life of the disciple of Jesus Christ. That out of our prayer life and our personal friendship with Jesus Christ comes an authority and a power to change an environment, to change space as we enter into it just by our very presence. Because

wherever we go, the Holy Spirit, God himself goes with us in our skin. So that where we go, we bring with us, if we choose to exercise it by faith, spiritual authority over God's dominion; that it's God's kingdom and he's given you and I power to do good and to work miracles even in the space in which we live. This is a deep conviction of mine.

It was Daniel's den because God had given him the keys and the authority. I don't think he was afraid, in fact the scriptures say that the angels saved Daniel because Daniel trusted in God. Trust is faith. Daniel absolutely trusted God. What den are you in today? What den are you facing today? What are you worried about? What keeps you up at night? What are you journaling about? I want to tell you the spaces that you're going into, the people that you're meeting, the lion's you're facing, they belong to God. This is the Father's world, and God has given you, if you've put on Christ, he has given you spiritual authority over the world in which you live. You have incredible power, more than you know. And we have to remember that he has given us authority and we have it up until the point we yield it. He has given you authority. This is mainly a big part of what Jesus is teaching his disciples – to live with his authority in his kingdom.

Remember, when Jesus heals people he usually doesn't pray that they get healed, he just heals them. He doesn't say, "Father, I pray that

you would raise Lazarus from the dead,” right? No, he commands it with authority. He says, “Lazarus, come forth.” When the girl is dead, he doesn’t say, “Lord, please raise this girl from the dead.” He says, “No, she’s sleeping. Wake up child.” When he says to hurting people who are suffering with him, who are not the light of the world, he doesn’t say become the light of the world, he doesn’t say shine brighter, he doesn’t say try harder. He says you are the light of the world. Incidentally, this is why I preach the way I preach, why I don’t say become a holy person. I say you are a holy person. Because of the spiritual authority God has given me as a pastor, I speak it over you that every chain is broken. I have spiritual authority to break chains in your life and you have spiritual authority, as well, and you need to exercise it and live through it because you have immense power to declare into your world life, goodness, peace, and joy. You have the power within you to break chains, not because it’s your kingdom, but because it’s God’s and he’s given you authority.

One of the main things they point out about Jesus as a prophet or a rabbi is that they say he doesn’t teach as the rabbis and the Pharisees. Rather, he teaches as one having authority. And he gives that authority to you and to me and he gives it to his disciples. Here are a few texts: in Luke chapter 9, when he sends out the twelve, it says, “When Jesus had called the twelve together, he gave them power and authority to drive out

all demons and to cure diseases, and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal the sick.”

Luke chapter 10, when he sends out the 72, he says, “Whoever listens to you, listens to me. Whoever rejects you rejects me. But whoever rejects me rejects the one who sent me. The 72 returned with joy and said Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name.” Later on he says, “I have given you authority to trample on serpents and snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy. Nothing will harm you.” When are we going to start living into this?

John chapter 20 says, “Again Jesus said peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, I am sending you. And with that, he breathed onto them and said receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone their sins, if you forgive anyone’s sins, their sins are forgiven. If you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.” And think about the way in which the apostles go around forgiving sins, healing souls, and healing bodies. They almost never say dear Lord, please heal this person. They simply just say stand up and walk. Be healed. They act as though they already know what God wants and as though they’ve already been given authority in the space in which they live.

In the story for example with Peter, one of the first big miracles at the gate called beautiful, this man asked them for money and Peter said, “Silver and gold have I not, but this we do have – rise up and walk.” You know what I mean? And so I just want to begin by framing this that the way we pray is not often the way the disciples of Jesus prayed. Because they prayed as those having authority, those knowing what God wanted, and when they prayed especially for others, they commanded as those having authority. Be healed. Be well. Be whole. Be alive. Be saved. Be forgiven. And I try and work this into my own prayer life, and it is hard. That when I pray as a pastor for a sick person, I do still say Lord, I pray that you heal this person, but then I always catch myself and I say your body, as well.

The scriptures say you are Christ’s ambassador. An ambassador has immense power, and an ambassador can declare war. An ambassador on behalf of the king can make trade deals. An ambassador can sign contracts and report back to the king and tell the king what he did on the king’s behalf. The ambassador has all the power and the authority that the king has. And Paul says we are ambassadors of Christ Jesus. We are ambassadors of the king. God wants us to do what Jesus did in our world.

And many of us, we think well when we pray, we say God, if it's your will, I pray that you'd heal me. It is God's will that you'd be healed. God is ushering in his kingdom. And when his kingdom is fulfilled, there won't be sickness and there won't be poverty. And there won't be all of the chains of society that we see. They will be broken. You should have confidence and you do have confidence because God has given you the spiritual authority to break every chain of evil and darkness in your world. You can do it. God has called you and given you the power to break every chain. And though we feel afraid, and though we feel worried, and though we're intimidated, don't be afraid. The greatest commandment, most common commandment in the bible is don't be afraid and don't worry. Why? Because that is the thing that will sap your power and your ability to do great things for God in your world. You have authority. Don't yield it. You have authority. Don't give it up. If you've been a boss, if you've been a coach, you know that you have authority to command space, right? And the only time you lose it is when you just sort of yield it. And you've been given spiritual authority; don't yield it. Live with the power that God has given you. Be bold. Be strong for the Lord is with you.

I almost want to say the more you resist wanting to be bold, the more you should be bold. If you're quite naturally bold and confident and braggadocios, maybe you need to dial it back a little bit. But for most of

you that are hearing this and you're like I don't know if I should, you're the perfect person because you understand social cues, you understand the needs of people, so be bold. Be strong. You're a good person and God needs good people to do good and be good.

Theologically, we believe that God gave original authority to Adam and Eve over this world. To abade and shamar. To care for. To rule this world. Adam and Eve yielded that authority to the devil. And God took that authority from the devil and the cross and resurrection, and gave it to Jesus Christ. This is now Jesus' world. And Jesus gives you, he's the king, this is his dominion, he gives you authority to do his work in this world. You have immense power, so live by faith. Declare into this world, speak into this world, and do into this world what Christ would do, what Christ would speak, what Christ would say. Don't be afraid. Be bold. Be bold.

I already know what many of you are thinking. Most of you, if you're like me, have a sense of lingering shame. I'm not good enough, I'm not perfect, I'm not smart enough, I'm not good looking enough, I have the baggage, maybe you have mental illness, maybe you have some addiction issue and you just think I am not qualified for this. Can I just tell you that Jesus' favorite people to pick on his behalf are the unqualified? I just want to say that in the kingdom of God, it begins with

grace and dignity, and that although you may be unqualified, you are not disqualified. Remember that. If you are unqualified, it does not mean you are disqualified.

And the reason is, and the scriptures say so that we cannot boast, right? That God loves picking the most unqualified people to do the most amazing things! Why? So that he receives the glory and that we do not boast. So the more unqualified you think you are, I want to just point out that its very likely that you're the one that's picked for whatever it is that you think you're supposed to do. Just because you're unqualified doesn't mean you're disqualified. God's going to use you.

So when you pray, pray with authority. Can I just say that prayer is never a waste of time. I'm concerned about the way in which we view prayer and reflection and solitude and silence and spiritual disciplines. These are the things we don't want to do that make all the difference in the world. We have to remember that we are in the midst of a spiritual battle. Jesus Christ is warring against the usurper. Light is warring against the darkness and prayer is one of the main places that this war takes place. We are strengthened, we are galvanized, we are armored up. We are given what we need, the sustenance to endure the battles of our day. And God is calling you to battle, and that, very often is what prayer

is. There is a struggle in prayer that is good for you and it's good for me. So when you pray, pray with authority.

I know that praying sometimes takes a long time to get an answer. That doesn't mean that it's not on its way. I think praying is a lot like ordering something on Amazon. You know like when it says it'll be three to five business days, and now you're like feeling bad because you think it's going to be more closer to that five business day instead of the three business day, that's always such a bummer. I really do think, though, that praying, very often, is like this. That it's like when you pray there is a time that it takes for, I don't know, a prayer to develop. This is so mysterious and there are no rules to it.

But I just want to say that when we pray, God does hear our prayer. And yes, he is still king. So yes, he can overrule you, and he does all the time. It stinks. I hate it when God overrules my prayers. But because you don't always get what you want, because you don't always see miracle, because you don't always get the answer that you ask for does not mean you do not have authority. You do. And too often we confuse the fact that because I got overruled, that doesn't mean I don't have authority anymore. You do. Do not let the enemy deceive you that because of some mistake you've made or some issue in your life that you're unqualified to live with authority for God's good world. You're not.

And very often, when we lean into our calling, that's actually when we defeat a lot of the baggage in our life, when we feel a deep sense of calling.

God's going to come through for you. He loves you. Jesus never went around making people sick. Jesus shows us what God is like. He reveals to us what the Father is like. He does not go around saying I see that you're sick, but you've got this sin in your life, and you know I really want.. like three weeks of good behavior and then come back to me and we'll talk. Right? And he doesn't go to people saying you Pharisees, you sinners, I'm going to make you sick now until you learn your lesson and then come back to me. There is zero evidence, in my opinion, that although God does discipline us, that God does not make people sick to teach them a lesson. God does not hurt his children or abuse his children to teach them a lesson. He loves you. He is coming through for you. He's not going to hold your sin against you, your mistakes against you. You're not perfect, neither am I. He's coming through for you. Believe it. Believe it. Be bold. He's coming through for you. It'll be okay.

Saturate your life with scripture if you want to live with authority. There is nothing like the bible that brings life, and I know it's confusing sometimes, and I know there are things in here that will trouble you and bother you, it still has power. The word of God is so faithful.

So do we have these pictures? I'll put these on my Instagram if you want. This is some of the pictures in our house. Hannah loves to do this. Isn't her writing amazing? That's a calligraphy pen. So when you walk around our house, these are like the little scriptures that are around our house to reaffirm the authority that God has given us. One of the battles we're facing is the sickness of our son, and his brain disease. But God has healed him and is healing him and he's healed Hannah and we continue to stand on the authority of the word of God.

Dodie Osteen, who God defeated cancer in her life, says in her book, "I know I would have died if it had not been for the Bible." And I love that line because I love it when people love the Bible. There is no formula. We're all going to die. But I still believe that in the midst of life, that we have authority and we have authority over sickness, we have authority over injustice, we have authority over all of the things that we face in our daily life and God is calling you to break every chain, to be a part of his kingdom, breaking into this world.

So change your view of space. This is your Father's world. When you go into a den, it's God's den. And when you see those lions, those are God's lions. They are in his dominion and he has given you authority to rule over that space. So when you go into a meeting, stand tall. When

you have to meet with people or confront someone, stand tall. Be confident. When you have to face evil, stand tall. When you have to speak the truth in love, stand tall. Hold your chin up. Live with authority in your world. When you face the hard things in life, do it with courage and the authority that God has given you. We need loving, good, joyful, peaceful people to have courage and live with authority. And as they do, this world gets better. Your actions make such a huge difference in this world so whatever your crisis is, whatever it is you're facing, God's coming through for you. Have faith. Be bold. Be strong and live with authority. He's given it to you in Jesus' name. Amen.