AUTHORITY OF THE BELIEVER

JIMMY SWAGGART

"And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power,

"Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places,

"Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come:

"And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church,

"Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all" (Ephesians 1:19-23).

"Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Matthew 18:18).

I REMEMBER THIS

As a child, I was impressed as the saints would stand and request prayer for various problems. They would mention individuals who were sick and needed healing. They would ask others to pray for their respective needs. Everyone was asked to agree together and pray for answers to the needs.

I started attending Sunday School at a very early age. I began reading the Bible and studying the Word of God when I was eight years old. I was told God knew everything and could do everything. I believed that then, and I still do.

As a child I wondered—if God *knows* everything and can *do* everything—why do Christians have to ask other Christians to pray for specific needs?

Why doesn't God just solve the problem without being asked? He knows it *should* be done.

Perhaps this is a question you have asked yourself. It is something I hope to deal with in this message. Possibly a great many questions will be answered concerning the relationship between God and the human race.

YEARS AGO IN DETROIT

Frances and I conducted an eight-week crusade in 1968 at the Brightmoor Tabernacle in Detroit, Michigan, which was then pastored by Bond Bowman. It was, and still is, a great church. God moved in miraculous ways during our meetings there, and I will never forget it. At the

conclusion of the meeting, Brother Bowman told me that during those eight weeks, thirty-five families had joined the church and ninety people had been baptized in water. The income of the church had increased by many hundreds of dollars each week. It was a tremendous time of spiritual refreshing.

While conducting the meetings, I went to the church each morning and afternoon to pray and study for the evening service. Even though there were two FM Christian radio stations in town, I only had an AM radio in my car. Consequently, I started listening to a talk show which caught my interest.

The young man who served as host for the program was somewhat anti-God. And something occurred one day that shocked me. A woman called and happened to mention God. This triggered a reaction deep within the host and he erupted in a *tirade.* He literally *shouted* into the microphone:

"If there is a God, why does He allow the Vietnam war to continue, killing thousands of people?"

"Why does God allow car wrecks and plane crashes?"

"Why does God allow little children to die of leukemia?"

And that wasn't all he had to say.

"Christians can talk about how great and powerful God is, but if He is *really* that powerful, why doesn't He eliminate all the problems affecting the world?"

Much as I deplored the manner in which this misguided young man was venting his emotions, I had to admit: His question *was* valid. Have you ever asked yourself the same question? Have you ever wondered why God does *not* take care of the many problems that so *desperately* demand attention? I am sure you have. This is the question I hope to answer within this message. And in order to do so, we must go back to the very beginning of the world.

ADAM AND EVE

In the first chapter of Genesis we are told: *"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth."* We do not know exactly *when* this was because there is an indeterminate gap between the first and second verses. But we do know that God spent six days renovating the earth and bringing it back to its condition of beauty and habitation. During this six-day period He made man. I believe man was His highest achievement in all of creation.

God said in Genesis 1:26 that man was made *"in the image and likeness of God."* Those two words, "image" and "likeness," imply far more than we

are able to comprehend. Man was made *God-like* in quality. Do not misunderstand. Man has never been, nor ever will be, God. The teaching which has become prominent among some sects, that man will eventually work himself into the position of *being God,* is totally unscriptural and erroneous. Even though man possesses many Godlike qualities, he will *always* be subject to our Heavenly Father.

MAN HAS A WILL

The most striking factor in God's creation of man is the *will* of man. In other words, God allowed man a will of his own. This is of great import in God's dealing with man and in man's dealing with God.

It sets man apart from the animals. It sets man apart from all of God's creation as a whole. Man has the power of free choice. He can choose to serve God—or to rebel against Him. He can choose to love Him or hate Him. He can choose to curse Him or praise Him. Man has this choice. It is man's unique quality, and it sets him apart from everything else.

SOMETHING ELSE MUST BE SAID

There is another point which should be brought out. Evolution is taught in many of our public schools. But, in truth, the *opposite* of evolution is the real situation.

Man has not gradually improved over the ages. If anything, man has *degenerated.*

When God *made* Adam, he was not subject to Satan, he had not experienced the fall, and he had an intelligence far surpassing anything imaginable today. For instance, Adam gave all the animals of the earth, the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea their names. This is an impressive accomplishment within itself. But it is even more impressive than it appears on the surface. Within these names is incorporated all the characteristics of each individual animal. In other words, Adam had to know *everything* about each specific animal, fowl, or fish. He even had dominion over the heavens above the earth.

So, when God made Adam, He represented the ultimate example of God-given knowledge in man. But look at man today in his fallen state. Look with pity on the poor drunk lying in the gutter. Cry for the prostitute who is old before her time. Lament the dope addict who has wasted his life in debauchery. It seems that God's most prized creation hasn't amounted to very much.

The reason for this? Man suffered a precipitous fall—and Satan became lord of this earth. But in order to fully understand this concept, we must again go back to the first chapter of the Bible.

DOMINION

In the verse we referred to before (Genesis 1:26), it says,

"...and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth."

First, in refuting the "evolutionists," God would *not* have given dominion of His beautiful planet earth to some semi-human primate. He entrusted it to a genius. He gave it to His greatest creation—man.

Within the word "dominion," we have the root meaning "dominate." Dominion does not actually mean ownership, for *God* retains the ownership of the earth. But man, in essence, *controlled* it. He ruled it, and for all practical purposes it was his. Adam could do as he wished with the earth. God made this clear to him. And therein entered Satan.

A WORLD WITHOUT SIN

Before Satan entered the picture, the planet earth was a world without sin. It was a world without judgment, sickness, disease, or bondage. There was no taint of sorrow or heartache. Death and war didn't exist. The world was ruled in love, honesty, sincerity, and integrity—-under *God.* This was *God's* environment. And because it was, God would come down and talk with Adam in the cool of the day (Genesis 3:8).

God told Adam he could partake of any tree in the garden except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. He *said, "for in the day you eat this you shall surely die"* (Genesis 2:17). But Adam and Eve *did* partake of the fruit of that tree, and Adam and Eve did die.

They did not die immediately in the physical *sense.* That was some time in coming. But they suffered separation from God immediately, which was the "death" God was talking about. It would ultimately bring *all* types of death into the world.

ADAM GAVE THE WORLD TO SATAN

In essence, what Adam did was this: he traded lords. God the Father, in all goodness, mercy, compassion, humility, and meekness, was no longer God of this world. Now Satan would become god of this world. Adam had every right to do what he did. The world was his by commandment of God and he had dominion over it. If he did as God directed, it would be a

paradise forever. But, if he *disobeyed* God—and he did— Satan would become the lord of the earth.

One may ask, "Why would Adam do such a thing? Why didn't God stop him?"

This is really not the subject of my discourse. God had reasons for *allowing* Adam to do this. But as to why *Adam* did what he did, I must confess I do not know. The only way I could answer that would be by asking another question. Why do many people do the things *they* do? Why does the drunkard drink himself insensible, knowing it is causing untold heartache and destruction? Why does the dope addict push a needle into his vein, knowing it will cause death? Why do some of you who read this booklet today continue to rebel against God? The list is endless.

As I said, man has the power of choice. He can make any decision he wants to make, even though it may do *him* harm, and those around him. That is what Adam did. He had the *right* to make the decision he made, even though it was a decision which would bring utter chaos. He traded the world, and all that was in it, for the knowledge of good and evil. It was the most expensive trade any human ever made. Still, millions are making the same trade today. They are trading their eternal souls (which will never die) for the baubles, trinkets, and gadgets of this *present* world. Truly, they are of no value whatsoever (II Corinthians 4:18).

THE PICTURE HAS CHANGED

So you see how the entire complexion has changed. God no longer guides the destiny of the world. Satan has become the god of this world, the prince of the powers of the air. Even though the world per se *belongs* to God, the world *system* belongs to Satan.

This is where the problem enters, and this is the important fact to remember. All the evil, problems, difficulties, wickedness, Suffering, sorrow, heartache, death, destruction, war, cursing, profanity, and disease in the world today *are not* caused by God Almighty. Jesus said in St. John 10:10, *"The thief cometh not but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy."* So all the heartaches and difficulties in the world are caused by

Satan. He has the legal right to do what he is doing. He is the author of sickness, war, destruction, and all such things. Consequently, because Adam gave Satan the dominion (which God had once given to him), Satan can now legally *use* this dominion, as the god of this world, to bring death and destruction.

People ask the question: Why doesn't God come down and stop it all? Simply because God cannot *do* that. In the legal order of events, God *owned* the world systems, but in Genesis 1:26 He gave them to Adam. Adam in turn, through breaking the laws of God (yielding to the suggestions of Satan by partaking of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil), gave his dominion to Satan. So Satan has the legal right to do what he is doing. But, thank God, Jesus came to break the dominion of Satan and will soon put a stop to it altogether.

THE STORY OF REDEMPTION

The story of the fall of man, and God's redemption of man through His son Jesus Christ, is the greatest story ever written. He came down to this world and stripped Himself of His deity. He never ceased to be God, but at the same time He became man and died for the sins of man. This satisfied the courts of justice in the halls of heaven. It is sung about in thousands of songs. It is proclaimed from behind countless pulpits. It is shouted aloud in innumerable sermons.

"There is a light in the valley of death now for me
Since Jesus came into my heart,
And the gates of that city beyond I can see
Since Jesus came into my heart."

When Jesus died on Calvary and rose from the dead, He bought back—with His own blood—the dominion and authority which had been given away to Satan. In essence, Satan's power was broken. He is still the god of this world, but he does not have the authority he once had. Man *can* now be free, and does not *have* to live under the domination of Satan. Actually, in Matthew 28:18, Jesus said,

"all power is given unto me in heaven and earth."

This means exactly what it says. Since Jesus' sacrifice, Satan really has no power except a pseudo-power *stolen* from the child of God or mankind in general. In other words, where man once was *held in bondage* by Satan and had little choice in the matter, he now, through the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, has a choice. He doesn't *have* to suffer the bondage of Satan, but he can be free by the mighty power of God.

"Once like a bird in prison I dwelt No freedom from this sorrow I felt,
But Jesus came and listened to me And glory to God. He set me free!

The Lord Jesus Christ gained this mighty power, and then—miracle of miracles—turned around and bestowed this power and authority on His

children in the world.

"And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive" (Matthew 21:22).

"Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them" (Mark 11:24).

"If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you" (John 15:7).

"If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it" (John 14:14).

I WANT YOU TO NOTICE THE *PERSONAL* REFERENCE

In each one of these Scriptures, Jesus directs the authority toward the pronoun *you.* In other words, He has said whatever *you* ask; whatever *you* allow; whatever *you* loose; whatever *you* desire. This is the crucial point. *Jesus has given the authority He bought and paid for at Calvary to His body, the church.*

The child of God has vast power but, all too often, does not realize he has it. Most Christians live far below the potential of their spiritual privileges. They walk in ignorance and do not understand the reason for the catastrophes swirling about them. They take whatever Satan dishes out, thinking it is their "lot in life." They don't *know* they can have victory and power in physical, mental, spiritual, domestic, and psychological areas. How? Through the power of the Lord Jesus Christ!

Jesus Christ has given His authority to His people. Ephesians 1:22-23 says,

"And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body...z

*T*his is a simple statement. Jesus Christ is the head of the church. The church is His body. I ask you a question now. Where are the feet? Of course, anyone would say the feet are part of the body. This clearly indicates that all things have been put *under* the feet of the church. And this means you and me.

The Lord is simply telling us in this passage of Scripture that every single problem that comes our way is *under our feet.* Through Jesus Christ we have victory over it.

Now Satan will try to tell you otherwise. But the *fact* is, it is under your feet. You may not feel like it or act like it. You may not talk like it. But the Holy Spirit, through the Apostle Paul, states this as a fact! And that's good enough for me.

Praise God, victory is mine! The day I learned I had this authority, it staggered my imagination and changed my Christian experience. Jimmy Swaggart could no longer be pushed around by the devil. Satan was a defeated foe. I possessed—through Jesus Christ—great power which could *control* events! This is a subject Satan does *not* want the child of God to hear or understand. He wants to keep us in the dark.

The moment we begin to understand the authority of the believer, Satan's domination will begin to break. He will no longer hold sway in our heart and life, or in our home or business. He will be a defeated foe and he can no longer do the things he once did.

But sad to say, most Christians don't know or understand their place and position. I pray that everyone reading this message will begin to allow this light to flood your hearts and lives. I pray you will begin to *use* the power God has given you.

WHAT IS AUTHORITY?

Authority is *delegated power!* Years ago, before we started flying to our crusades, we drove from meeting to meeting. On one trip we had to go through St. Louis, Missouri. I don't remember why we got off the interstate and took a byway through the city, but I do remember stopping at a red light.

The traffic was heavy. There was a policeman directing traffic. He was, like most policemen, dressed in white gloves, leather boots, gun on his side, and so forth. He was holding up his hand, directing traffic.

Coming directly toward me was a giant tractor-trailer. The policeman held up his white-gloved hand and the tractor-trailer ground to a screeching halt. I sat in my car waiting for him to direct us on. I could hear the driver of the big tractor patting the accelerator and his big diesel roaring. I knew the driver had his foot on the brake.

Imagine, for the sake of illustration, a driver in that big tractor-trailer not *caring* for policemen. He could have eased his foot off the brake and the policeman couldn't have stopped him or delayed his progress one iota. Physically, he couldn't have done *anything.* The giant tractor-trailer was so much larger than the policeman, it would have been no contest. But the man in the truck did not dare do such a thing.

If he even entertained such a *thought*, he did not *do* it. He knew that behind *that* policeman were all the other policemen of St. Louis. If that

were not enough, they could call out the National Guard. And if that were not enough, they could get the Army, Navy, and the Air Force.

This is what you call delegated power. When God Almighty saves our soul, He does not hide us like a hermit in some place of seclusion. He sets us right in the midst of the intersections of life. Satan comes roaring down on us like a lion seeking whom he might devour. It seems that he is going to gobble us up. (And, sad to say, many Christians tuck their heads and run.) They run in fear and defeat. But thank God for those who *stand.*

If you will hold up your hand and, in the name of Jesus, resist the devil and command him to stop, he *must* stop. That is what Scripture says.

Now, there are *many* reasons why he stops. But one of the main reasons is this: he knows that behind you are all the holy angels. He knows within you is the Holy Spirit. He knows that behind the Holy Spirit is the Lord Jesus Christ. And behind the Lord Jesus Christ is God the Father.

He doesn't *dare* come up against *this* type of power. *This is authority!* This is the authority *you* have as a child of God.

So when you stand in the intersections of life, with Satan coming against you with every type of problem he can bring your way, *do not run.* Don't fold over in defeat. *Hold up your hand and, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, command Satan to stop!* The Lord Jesus Christ promised,

"Whatsoever you bind (or stop) on earth, shall be bound in heaven. Whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."

So you see, the problems of this world are caused by Satan. And, sad to say, Christians *allow* them to happen. I am not trying to say that *every* minor incident is caused by the failure of the child of God to exercise his authority in the Lord Jesus Christ. But many things *are!*

Naturally the Christian cannot help what the unsaved person does. He cannot force the sinner to give his heart to Jesus or to conduct himself correctly. He has no authority over other individuals. (We will come to this in a moment.) But he does have authority over the *spirits* of this world!

A PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

Years ago I applied for the purchase of a radio station in the city of Baton Rouge. Our city did not have a station airing any type of Gospel whatsoever. Every time you turned on the radio, you heard rock, bop, pop, or something of *that* nature. My heart *longed* to see a Christian station in the city of Baton Rouge.

I heard of one that had gone bankrupt. A friend of mine told me that I might be able to acquire it. We made application for it. Then I journeyed with my lawyer to Washington D.C., trying to persuade the FCC commissioners to allow us to buy the station.

The head of the FCC at this particular time interrupted his vacation to fly back to Washington to inform us we could *not* have the station. It was going to be put out for bids and anyone would be able to apply for it. It would probably take eight or ten years for a settlement in the courts.

Now it would have been very easy for me to just give up. What was the use? It looked hopeless. Even my own lawyer said it was hopeless. It was a fight we couldn't win.

I remember going before God one day about the station. I prayed these words: "Lord, maybe it is not Your will for us to have this station, so I will just say, 'Give it to us if it *is* Your will.'"

The moment I said that, the Spirit witnessed that I was in error. It sounded very holy. It sounded very humble. It is what many Christians say, and it *should* be said in some circumstances. But this time it was wrong! The Spirit of God spoke to my heart.

He said, "Son, wouldn't it *be* my will to have a radio station airing the Gospel? It would *bless* people, rather than rock and roll and the types of music that now flood the airwaves." Certainly this was obvious.

I said, "Lord, surely this would be Your will."

The Lord told me to immediately ask forgiveness for making such a statement, and then to quickly begin confessing that the station was going to be mine. If I didn't start *immediately,* we would *lose* the station.

I can't explain all this. I can only report what happened. I stood there stunned. It is an experience I will never forget. I can take you to the spot where I was standing in my prayer room. I remember the sinking feeling that came over my spirit when I started praying, "Lord, give us the station if it be Thy will."

You see, I *was* exerting a measure of authority over Satan, but the authority was beginning to weaken. Naturally, Satan was taking advantage of this. The moment I asked the Lord to forgive me for what I had said, and started thanking Him for the station, faith flooded my heart. I knew I was back on the right trick.

I said, "Lord, it is mine! I can hear the Gospel music playing over it now. I can hear the preaching of the Word."

No telegram suddenly appeared saying the station was mine. But in my spirit, by faith, I called that which wasn't, an accomplished fact. And I knew then I had it.

In that same encounter with God, I remember sinking to my knees, sobbing uncontrollably. The Spirit of God was upon me very heavily. I said, "Lord, I have tried everything I know. We have gone to Washington, D.C. We have solicited the help of some of the most powerful politicians in the country. But the FCC has turned us down and said we could not have the station. What more can I do?"

He said to me, "Son, your problem is this. Some four of the FCC commissioners are men who lean toward socialism. They have no sympathy for the Gospel. This is your problem."

"Agree with someone who has faith as you do, that these men will be removed from office. Then men will come in to take their places who support the propagation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ by radio."

That is exactly what I did. Frances and I agreed together that those four men, including the Commissioner, would be replaced with *good* men. Oh, this is where the child of God must make a stand. This is why Scripture tells us, *first of all*, to pray for those in authority over us.

We are so accustomed to *complaining* about politics and world events, we never realize that complaining is not the answer.

I believe if the Church of the Living God, which is more powerful than a thousand General Motors, would band together—in agreement—to *believe* God for the problems of this present world, most of them could be solved.

I believe that the child of God, with the body of Christ, could control the economy, politics, legislation, and most of the things taking place in the world today. Again, I am *not* saying we can produce a Utopian paradise. This will not happen until Jesus Christ comes back (and thank God, He is coming). But many problems, through the authority Jesus Christ has given us, can be controlled! If we will only *agree* together and take authority over Satan, victory can be ours!

OH, I HAVE TO SHOUT!

In four months' time, four of the FCC commissioners, including the Chairman, were looking for jobs! No, I can't explain it. Some of you may not even believe it. But it happened.

And almost without exception, the four men who took their places were Christians, or at the very least, men who were sympathetic to the

presentation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The man who became the *Chairman* was a born-again Christian!

One of the men was a preacher of the Gospel. He sent an FCC lawyer to my attorney's office. He laid papers on his desk. "Tell Jimmy Swaggart," he said, "that he has the station."

My lawyer told me it was something that, to his knowledge (and he worked for many years in radio and television broadcasting), *had never happened before.*

Since that moment, better things have happened in the field of Gospel radio and Gospel television than ever before in history. Some might say this "just happened." Well, people can say what they want. But I know what God spoke to my heart, and I know what *happened.* And that's good enough for me.

Some might even venture the question, "Would you be so foolish as to believe that one lone Christian could change the structure of the broadcasting system of the Federal government?"

Yes, I do. I do not feel matters of great moment should be challenged on a whim. But in certain circumstances, things *can* be changed. My confrontation with the FCC convinces *me* it's possible.

EVIL SPIRITS CAN BE CONTROLLED BY THE CHILD OF GOD

Here again, this is where the authority comes in. In the early part of this message I said we do not have authority over *people.* If you think, as a child of God, you can pray and *order* someone to do something, I have news for you. *It will not work!*

Remember, in the Garden of Eden, even God Almighty would not *force* Adam to refrain from eating the forbidden fruit. Likewise, God will not force man to do anything on the strength of *your* prayer.

Man is a free moral agent. He has to come of his own volition. So you see, your authority is not over mankind. You can't manipulate men like pieces on some celestial chess board. It just doesn't work that way.

God Almighty does not operate that way. He will deal with man, impress man, and move upon man. But He will never make, force, or coerce him to do anything.

But this doesn't mean we are powerless. Even though we do not have authority over *mankind,* as Christians we do have *authority over the spirits of darkness.* The fact is that the world's problems are caused by evil spirits

under their master, Satan. Entire nations are governed by evil spirits. *Households are* controlled by evil spirits.

We wonder why people do the terrible, unbelievable things they do. It is because evil spirits are dominating these people, influencing and driving them. Do not misunderstand. That does not mean everyone is "demon-possessed." Actually, there are very few people who are *demon-possessed.* I personally believe that all demon-possessed people are either insane or demented to a greater or lesser degree. But I also believe that every *unsaved* person is more or less *controlled* by demons. Again I emphasize, this does not mean demon-possessed. But it does mean *influenced* by demons.

Even Christians can be influenced by demon spirits. This is why there are sometimes problems in churches. And this is why pastors, instead of fighting with combative individuals in their churches, should take authority over the evil spirits who are *behind* the actions of these people.

Some may ask, "How can Satan compel *Christians* to do certain things?" The answer is fairly simple. It is because many Christians have shortcomings in their lives. Satan takes advantage of these failings and causes problems. But the fact remains, it is evil spirits who cause the problems. If the pastor would take authority over those spirits and command them to depart, most church problems could be solved with no confusion. And this holds, of course, for many other situations.

THE QUESTION MAY BE ASKED

Some may ask the question, "Brother Swaggart, suppose I take authority over Satan respecting the drinking problem of my husband, or the waywardness of my children, and nothing happens?"

This does happen. Many people lead wayward lives because they are driven by Satan. Down deep, they don't *want* to do it. Consequently, when you take authority over these situations, the situation will stop.

But in other cases, these are people who *want* to do what they're doing. Satan supports and encourages them. But *they* have wicked desires in their hearts to take the courses they are taking. And if they want to do it, there is really nothing you, God, or anyone else can do about it.

I realize some Christians may take exception when I say there is nothing God can do. But look around. We see murderers, despots, and dictators who cause untold heartache and trouble. And *they* aren't stopped. Don't you think God is displeased with the terrible actions they are taking? Surely He is. But He will not stop them, because if they want to live and act in this manner,

they have the "right" to do so. Admittedly, they will come to a wicked end. Their final state will be death and destruction. But while they live, they wreak havoc in the world.

THE KEY IS *YOU*

So we have come full circle. Adam started out with authority and turned it over to Satan. Jesus Christ bought it back for us at Calvary. Then He gave it to us for an aid in performing His work on this earth. We have the authority today. We may not be using it, but we *have* it.

Thank God, multiplied hundreds of thousands of Christians all over this nation and around the world are beginning to recognize their authority in the Lord Jesus Christ. It is changing their homes, hearts, and lives—totally and absolutely.

But please do not misunderstand. I do not labor under the delusion we can walk around ordering and expecting events to take place. I know we can't cause nations to rise or fall. But the point is, Satan is a defeated foe. If we will but recognize our place and position, many situations can be aborted *before* they get out of hand.

Once again, I want to emphasize this: The world of evil, destruction, and sorrow will not stop until Jesus Christ comes back to this earth. But until that time, you and I can use the authority He has given us to win victory after victory in Jesus Christ.

The key is me, and the key is you—not God, not Jesus, and not the Holy Spirit. *They have already made their wills known.* The Lord has completed *His* plan of glory. He sits today at the right hand of the Father, His mission completed. Now it is up to us.

What are we doing about it? What are we going to do about the heathen who are dying without God? Will we sit back and do nothing? Or will we believe God for great victory? Will we allow Satan to run over us? Or will we take authority over him and trust God for a glorious triumph? Personally, I claim Joshua's phrase: *"As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."*

I WILL CLOSE WITH THIS

About 1961, Frances, Donnie, and I were in California for a series of meetings. Donnie was just a child. I recall, after the tour concluded, we started for home. We drove all night and day, slept a few hours the following night, and arrived in Baton Rouge sometime the next day. I was weary, to say the least.

We had no home then. We lived with my dad what little time we were in Baton Rouge. As soon as I walked in and greeted Dad, he told me to go next door and pray for my sister.

When I asked Dad what was wrong, he dropped his head and said I would see when I got there. The moment I walked into their house, I could sense something was wrong.

They greeted me eagerly, but a spirit of depression permeated the atmosphere. After exchanging a few words of small talk, I asked what seemed to be the trouble.

I looked at my sister, Jeanette. She weighed just over a hundred pounds. Bent in pain, she had just had one operation and was scheduled for another one. I watched as she walked to the couch and sat down. She dragged her leg behind her.

She had been injured in an automobile accident and had come very close to losing her leg. The doctor said she would probably never play the organ again. The leg just refused to bend.

That had not been their only tragedy. They had just lost their little girl, a darling child of two years, who drowned. Satan had done everything within his power to destroy their home and shatter their lives. He had almost succeeded.

My brother-in-law, a devoted and dedicated Christian, sighed and slumped onto the couch. He put his head in his hands and began to speak. His words spoke of dejection; words revealing confusion and defeat.

I knew how he felt. I had been there many times myself.

He said, "Jim, I do not understand it. I love God with all my heart. Net (my sister's nickname) and I have paid tithe on every dollar we've ever made. Of all the people in our church, we have won most of them to the Lord Jesus Christ."

He was telling the truth about all this. Then he said, "I seek God's face. I do not live a self-centered life. I love God with all of my heart. *Why are all these things happening to us?"*

NOW THIS IS THE GREAT QUESTION

I suppose more Christians have asked *this* question than any other: Why did this happen?

Do not misunderstand. I do not have the answers to all the problems of the world. I have seen things happen to dedicated, consecrated Christians

that Jimmy Swaggart can't explain. I make no claim of being a genius. But I have had some experience. And that is what I offer you.

Many Christians think if they live a Godly, consecrated life, it should secure some measure of safety and protection. But, actually, it does not. It plays a part, to be sure. But it is not so much a matter of our consecration. Wonderful and helpful as consecration is, it is our knowledge of the Word and our place and position in Christ that *carry us through.* It is standing on His authority that gets results.

I will admit, we all have a great deal to learn about this. I know I do. But I have learned a little, and I thank God for what He has taught me. How many hearing this message have asked the same question: Why?

What I say next may *not* always be the answer. But it was the answer in this particular case. I looked at my brother-in-law.

I did not know the answer. I stood weeping with them. I knew every word he said was true. My heart was torn with compassion.

I had stood beside the grave of the baby who had been recently snatched from them. I had stood beside my sister's bed when her leg was torn to pieces when her car was hit by a drunken driver. I had seen surgeries performed on her body until there was just a shell of her remaining.

I had seen my brother-in-law's business fall apart. They owed half the hospitals and doctors in town. The same question was in my mind: *Why?*

Before I left, I mouthed some ineffectual prayer. I don't think it amounted to much. I tried to console them as best I could, but my answers were no better than theirs.

I walked out of the house, too confused to remain inside. I slumped into my car. I pressed my head to the steering wheel and began to weep. I asked the Lord the same question my brother-in-law had asked.

"Why has all this happened?"

At the end of a long series of questions before God, I asked, "Lord when are *You* going to do something about this?"

I believe with all my heart, at that moment God spoke to me. "Son," he said, "it is not a question of when I am going to do something about it. When are *you* going to do something about it?"

When those words burst upon my mind it was like a floodlight turned on in a dark room. I *saw it!*

It was many years ago but how clearly I recall it. I almost tore the door off my car as I opened it. I leaped out and burst into the house.

If I remember correctly, I was shouting, commanding them to stand up. As I caught my breath, I told them they had *bowed* to the enemy long enough. They were children of the Most High God and they were to stand erect!

"God loves you," I shouted. "God hasn't brought these curses on you; Satan has! It's time we rebuke the powers of darkness from your business, from Jeanette's physical body, from your health, and from every phase and facet of your home."

The *moment* I said that, it seemed that faith hit the room like a gladiator's fist. They began to weep. And *this* time, it was not a weeping of defeat, but the cry of victory.

They threw their arms in the air and began to praise the Lord. The power of God filled that room, and they began to march through the house praising the Lord.

You see, there was nothing God could do until *we* took the initiative. When will the child of God realize this? We sit back and wring our hands and the devil runs roughshod over us. Until we use our faith and start standing *up* to Satan, and take authority over him through the blood of Jesus Christ, we will continue to have problems. But the moment we use the authority *God* has given us, great victory can be ours.

No, it did not happen immediately. There had to be a revamping process. But from that moment, they started walking the road of victory.

I could say *so* much about their lives. But suffice it to say, God gave them a beautiful home, restored my sister's health, and gave my brother-in-law a successful business. Today they have a beautiful family and pastor a church in Baton Rouge.

But Satan set out to *kill* my sister. He hates every child of God.

I have said it before and I will say it again. Satan kills, steals, and destroys. But Jesus said, *"I am come that they might have*

Again, I emphasize. Don't quote me as saying we can use some magic word or incantation and we will be magically transformed to a utopia. We *are* still living in a world of sin and iniquity. Satan is *still* the prince of the powers of the air and the god of this world. There is misery and heartache around us. The Word tells us not to think it strange concerning the trials and fiery darts that are thrown at us by the wicked one.

But the point to be emphasized is this: In many cases where Satan runs over us, we *can* have victory if we will use the authority God has given us.

In *many* problems plaguing our nation, if *only* the children of Almighty God would band together in unity and agree, tremendous things could happen. World events could be changed. Victory is ours—*in the Lord Jesus Christ.*

Far away the noise of strife upon my ear is falling,
Then I know the sins of earth beset on every hand;
Doubt and fear and things of earth in vain to me are calling,
None of these shall move me from Beulah Land.
Chorus
I am living on the mountain, underneath a cloudless sky,
I am drinking at the fountain that never shall run dry,
O yes, I am feasting on the manna, from a bountiful supply,
For I am dwelling in Beulah Land.