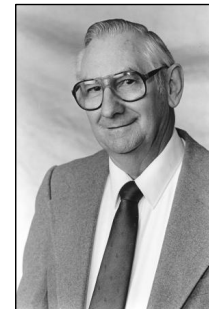




**The unabridged writings of Fred Morris,
Manna Publications**

Church Authority AUTHORITY OF A CHRISTIAN



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MANNA FOR ALL

To the reader: Have your Bible open as you study these notes. Remember that they have not been edited by the UK editorial team but are part of Fred's legacy of Bible teaching literature he wrote after his retirement to the USA in 1990. These notes also serve as the legacy of the late Jim Norman, Manna Publications UK, who checked and formatted and archived Fred's writings for him. Invite a friend to study with you. You will be blessed.



JESUS HAD ALL AUTHORITY

God the Father gave Jesus Christ, the Son, all authority in heaven and on earth. Just before He was crucified, Jesus went to the temple in Jerusalem. He often went there to teach the people. This time He found the outer court full of animals and their owners doing business. They were selling the animals to be used for sacrifice and changing money for people to pay the temple tax. The chief priests gave them permission to do this as they received a part of the profits? They were thieves, robbing their own people.

Jesus was angry to see how they were using God's house. The Jews were putting business before God! It was all wrong. God said His house was to be a house of prayer for all nations (Matt 21:13), not a place of business, but the Jews were using it for their own purpose and profit.

The temple was to be a place of worship, not of business. Jesus accused the Jews of turning into "a den of robbers" (Jer 7:11). So He made a whip and drove the animals and those who sold them out of the temple courtyards. He turned over the money tables and spilled the coins on the floor (John 2:19-22).

When the disciples saw Jesus do this, they remembered what David wrote hundreds of years before. David wrote many prophecies about the coming Messiah. He said this about Jesus: "the zeal for Your house will consume Me" (Psalm 69:9). Like all the prophets of old, God's Spirit told David what to write (2 Peter 1:20-21).

THE RULERS WERE ANGRY

Jesus went to Bethany and enjoyed a restful night with His friends (Matt 21:17). The next morning He went back to the temple courts to teach the people. Immediately, the angry Pharisees confronted Him, "Who gave You authority to do all this?" They wanted a miraculous sign (John 2:18). "What miraculous sign can You show us to prove Your authority to do all these things?" they demanded (Matt 21:23).

Instead of giving them a sign, Jesus asked them a question. "Where did John the Baptist get his authority?" Jesus asked them. His authority came from the same place as John's authority, from God. They knew this, but they did not give Him an answer.

John tells us that Jesus said, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it up in three days" (John 2:13-22). He was speaking of His own death on the cross. Three days after His body was put in Joseph's tomb, He would rise again from the grave in a new resurrected body. They would kill Him, but He would, Himself, rise from the dead. He would do this by His own power, for Jesus is God. He is the Son of God. He has life in Himself (John 5:26-27). His life is eternal life – God's life! He did not need to destroy their temple, God would do

Find your special gifts. Use them with authority. Take Satan's territory from him and hold it for the Lord. That is what Jesus meant when He said, "Occupy till I come" (Luke 19:13, AV). You would not like Him to find you sleeping when He comes.



TALK ABOUT

1. Are you 'occupying' a part of Jesus' kingdom?
2. How are you doing this?
3. Paul told the Ephesian Christians, "And after you have done everything Stand firm then..." (Eph 6:13-14). What was the 'everything' Paul told them to do?

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that in AD 70 when the Romans destroyed both the city of Jerusalem and the temple

Did these leaders think they could get rid of Him? "You destroy this body," Jesus said, and you think you will destroy My message. They were badly mistaken. They did not believe what Jesus had told them: He is God and that His gospel must go out to every nation. Every people group must have a chance to hear about the living God (Matt 24:14).

Men and women today are still asking: "What is Your authority? Who put You in charge here?" They believe they are in charge; they are in control!

Jesus gave these men a sign: "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days", He said (John 2:19). They did not receive His words. The sign so baffled and frustrated them that they used it against Him at His trial. They told Pilate, "This man stated, 'I am able to destroy the temple of God and to rebuilt it in three days.'" (Matt 26:61) But that was not what Jesus was talking about. He said that He (God) would raise up His own body after it had been in the grave for three days.

Peter put it to the leaders of the Jews more bluntly when he said, "You killed the author of life, but God raised Him from the dead" (Acts 3:15).



TALK ABOUT

1. Why was Jesus angry with the Pharisees and rulers?
2. How did the chief priests make a profit?
3. Why did Jesus say, "My Father's House will be a House of priests for all nations."



Read: Matthew 16:13-20

THE AUTHORITY TO BUILD

Jesus chose twelve humble men to be His disciples. Most of them were fishermen who had never been to school. Jesus gave His own authority to these men. He told them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me, therefore go and make disciples of all nations" (Matt 28:18-20). These twelve men turned the world of their day upside down. They used the authority Jesus had given them, the authority of Jesus' name.

When Jesus was with the twelve at Caesarea Philippi He asked them, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?"

Peter spoke for all of them when he replied, "You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God" (Matt 16:16).

Jesus said to Peter, "Blessed are you... for this was not revealed to you by man, but by My Father in heaven. I tell you that you are Peter and on this Rock I will build My Church, and the gates of Hades (Hell) will not overcome it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth, will

be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven" (Matt 16:18-29).

Jesus is the master builder. He said, "I will build My Church..." He is still building His Church today. It is the total number of men and women called out of the world, set apart from it and dedicated to Jesus Christ.

The Church of Jesus Christ is being built on a Rock, a sure foundation (1 Cor 3:11). By this 'Rock' some people understand Peter himself. But few would agree that weak and wavering Peter would make a good foundation for Christ's Church.

Others understand that Christ is the Rock. Paul tells us that "the Rock" went through the desert with the people of Israel (1 Cor 10:14). And David declared, "The Lord is my Rock and my fortress" (Psalm 18:27).

Yet others understand that Christ would build His Church on the confession Peter made that day, Peter confessed Jesus Christ, his Lord. "Now," Jesus said to the handful of men, "this is the great truth upon which I will build My Church." Take away this truth and the universal Church falls to the ground. If Jesus Christ is not the Son of God, the gospel we preach is in vain (1 Cor 15:14,17).



Read: Matthew 16:13-20

THE KEYS OF THE KINGDOM

What did Jesus mean when He said He would give the "keys of the kingdom" to Peter? He meant the authority to preach the gospel. Men are ordained by God and receive their authority to preach the gospel by the power of the Holy Spirit. Ministers of the gospel, be they ordained or lay preachers receive their authority from Jesus Christ.

Some think the keys were put into Peter's hands first because he was the first apostle to open the door of faith to the Jews (Acts 2) and to the Gentiles (Acts 10:28)..

All Christians have the power and the authority of Jesus by the indwelling Holy Spirit (Eph 1:13). The keys of the gospel, preached in the power of the Holy Spirit, will unlock Satan's dungeon and let his prisoners go free. Poor souls who have been tortured by Satan all their lives will see the light of the gospel (Isaiah 9:2). God's word speaks to them and they turn to Him. He is quick to forgive those who truly repent and He fills them with His joy and peace (John 14:27).

Jesus sent out seventy two disciples into the villages where He would come. He gave them directions (Luke 10:18-20). When they returned with joy, Jesus said, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven." Then he said to the disciples, "I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you."

In India, a boy in Bible school was kidnapped by his heathen parents and taken home. Another Christian lad was thrown under a truck by a demon. He limped when he walked. You may be sure that Satan is behind many road accidents. He comes to kill and to destroy (John 10:10).



TALK ABOUT

1. Why is Satan called the "adversary?"
2. What did Jesus say about Satan (John 8:34)?
3. What authority does a Christian have to stand against Satan (Luke 9:1)?
4. How does Satan deceive men and women (2 Cor 4:4)?
5. Jesus said, "He (Satan) was afrom the beginning, not holding to the truth" (John 8:44).
6. Why do men and women do things that destroy their bodies?
7. What kind of life does Jesus Christ give (John 5:24)?
8. Have you asked Jesus to set you free from wrong habits?

THE AUTHORITY TO JUDGE SIN

We are quick to judge others, and those looking on were quick to judge Jesus for healing a man on the Sabbath (John 7:21-23). Jesus had healed the man's body and spirit. They could only see the man's body had been healed. They were judging "by outward appearances. They are not all true believers who practice righteousness.

The authority given to the Christian is the authority to judge sin and false motives. The Pharisees appeared right to those around them, but Jesus said "Inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence (Matt 23:25,27-28).

USING YOUR AUTHORITY

"Don't get puffed up," Paul told the Christians in Rome. He told them how God had broken the unbelieving Jewish branches out of the Olive tree the unbelieving Jewish branches and grafted them, the believing Gentile branches, into the tree (Rom 11:17-21).

It was a picture of the "kindness and sternness of God." It was nothing to feel proud about. The Jews were broken off because of unbelief "and you stand by faith" and the grace of God, Paul said (Rom 11:20).

You can take no credit when God uses you to advance His kingdom. You have authority to do this "because His compassions never fail. They are new every morning..." (Lam 3:22).

His grace has equipped you. He has given you everything you need to do His will. And He has gifted you by His Spirit with special gifts to build up the Christian church (1 Cor 12:7-11). The Holy Spirit gives to each person "just as He determines."

drawn away of his own lust and enticed..." (Jas.1:14). Sin and evil lurk in the dark places of this world, waiting to bring us down. Watch where you go! Satan uses bad companions to take us to the wrong places.

Men and women are enticed by the glitter and excitement of the world around them. Satan makes sin look like fun, so we are tempted to join in! Very soon we are caught up in the 'pleasures' Satan offers: drugs, sex, lying, stealing and violence. All these flourish in the kingdom of darkness.

God wants us to love and obey Him only. And He gives us His Holy Spirit to help us. At the same time, the devil wants us to obey him. So the war in our spirits goes on! (Gal 5:16-17). "For we naturally love to do evil things..."

These evil things will destroy our bodies and our souls, but we can overcome them in the name of Jesus. Without the Holy Spirit it is impossible!

THE WILES OF THE EVIL ONE

We have the Holy Spirit and God's Word:

1. So that we can seek the Lord, be saved and have His protecting power (Ps 61:3).
2. "In order that Satan might not outwit us" (2 Cor 2:11).
3. So that we can overcome Satan as we stand in the victory of Jesus.(1 Cor 15:57).

A missionary to the Australian Aborigines watched a pagan ceremony. The Aborigines were performing an ancient spirit dance. She allowed someone she knew to place a headdress on her head. From that day on, she had very painful headaches. It seemed as if a band of iron was being tightened around her head.

For many months this servant of God was anointed and prayed for by Christian family and friends. At last the demon spirits left her and she recovered.

Satan sends out his demon spirits to harass people, make them sick or afraid or to injure them in some way. One writer called it "a mighty struggle for life against this demonic world."

A young woman who attended a Bible study wanted to make a decision for Christ, but did not. That night after she went home, she saw evil faces staring at her from every corner of the room. She took out her New Testament and read it aloud until they went away.

A woman who was breaking free from a cult, saw green slime all over her house. She was frightened, but did not dare tell anyone. She could not sleep at night. At last she called her sister to pray with her and together they commanded the evil spirits to leave the house. God answered their prayers and the evil spirits left the house.

The real enemy is always Satan himself. Snakes and scorpions give us the impression of evil spirits who try to stop Christians from taking God's authority over the kingdom of darkness (Col 1:13).



Read: Acts 1:9-11

AFTER THE RESURRECTION

After Jesus rose from the tomb, He taught His disciples for 40 days. They sat together on the hill called Olivet, just outside the city of Jerusalem. Then, as the people watched, Jesus was taken up to heaven in a cloud (Acts 1:10-11).

While He was with them, Jesus told the parable of the mustard seed (Mark 4:30-34). It is the tiniest of seeds, but grows into one of the largest bushes in the garden. Jesus used the idea to tell the disciples that the kingdom of God, though it had begun very small, would grow and grow until it filled the whole earth.

Jesus' last words to them still rang in their ears: "I am going to send you what My Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high" (Luke 24:49).

Fifty days after Jesus left them, they were all gathered in a large upper room. Suddenly there was a sound and a sign from heaven. The sound was like a mighty, rushing wind. It filled the house where they were sitting. And "they saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them" (Acts 2:2-4).

The Holy Spirit brings into our lives the authority of Jesus. We have His authority in many ways. We have His authority in every way needed to build up the Christian Church.

Born-again believers have the authority to preach the gospel. Indeed, Christ commanded His followers to "go into all the world and preach the gospel" (Matt 28:19-20).

Those who receive the gospel are loosed from the bondage of sin. They are set free to live for Jesus. It is not the preacher who sets men free, but the gospel message he preaches. The word of the Lord goes out with the power and authority of God's Spirit (Isaiah 55:11). He does the work!



TALK ABOUT

1. What were the 'keys' that Jesus gave to Peter (Matt 16:19)?
2. Who else could use the "keys to Christ's kingdom)?
3. Who brings the power and authority of Jesus Christ to the believer (John 3:5)?
4. What was the last command Jesus gave His people (Matt 28:19-20)?
5. How have you obeyed this command?



Read: James 5:13-20

AUTHORITY TO ANOINT THE SICK

If you are sick, call the elders. They must be the godly leaders in your local church, or the pastor and deacons. The point James is making is that they must be honorable and trustworthy men in the community, those who have faith to believe God will answer their prayers for the sick person and raise them up to health again.

If sin in the life of the sick person is causing their sickness (James 5:16), they must confess their sins to God and to those praying for them. It is not necessary for them to tell the whole neighborhood the wrong things they have done. It is important, however, for them to repent before a holy God and know that He has forgiven and healed them.

If you anoint the sick person with oil (on their forehead), it is a sign that that you are calling on the Holy Spirit to work a miracle for the sick person.

If a person is old and dying, ask God if it is His will to give the person more years of life. Moses wrote that the length of our days are numbered. They pass quickly, and they are known only To God, We cannot add one day to our lives or one inch to our height (Psalm 90:10). And do not be disappointed when an aged loved one is not healed, but passed into glory to be with Jesus.

Modern medicine also works wonders and should not be ignored. If medicine is available and a doctor prescribes it, thank God. Not all are so fortunate.



Read: 1 Timothy 3:1-13

DEACONS and ELDERS

Every small group needs leaders, here they are called deacons or oversees, When small house churches sprang up, Paul instructed young Timothy on how to appoint elders. Paul said they must be men of integrity and honest.

In family or business it is important to have a trusted leader. In matters of a country; "Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a disgrace to any people" (Proverbs 14:34).

How much more important is the governing of the church and the things of God? We seek men who live honest, upright lives. They must work and earn an honest wage. "Dishonest gain" is so common these days. It is hard to find candidates for a government office who have not already sought personal gain in some way that is not honest.

Paul also measured a man's qualification by his morality and the way he managed his household. (1 Tim 3:12). God says, let a man try his skills at controlling his household first. Then he is qualified to oversee the church of Jesus Christ.

Every person born into this world has a spirit that rebels against God. All men and women inherit Adam's sinful nature. Satan is in control until the day that person repents of his or her sins and allows the Spirit of God set them free. From that day one, God's Spirit takes control of the person.

Jesus told the Pharisees who wanted to kill Him, "You belong to your father, the devil, and you carry out your father's desire" (John 8:44).

Satan only wants to kill and destroy, but Jesus came to give life and peace (John 8:12). Satan works confusion in men's minds, and demon spirits teach people to do every wicked thing. Men and women cannot understand how evil Satan is, because he blinds their eyes to the truth (2 Cor 4:4). He is the great deceiver!

WE HAVE THE AUTHORITY OF JESUS' NAME

God commands us to "Resist the devil" (Jas 4:7). If we resist the devil, God assures us that he (Satan) will flee from us. But how can we resist an evil spirit we cannot see or touch? We cannot! Our only hope of success when we resist Satan is to claim God's grace and protection. Grace is available in abundance and protection is promised through the blood of Jesus.

Jesus prayed for His disciples, "Holy Father, protect them by the power of Your name – the name You gave Me... While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by the name You gave Me. None has been lost except the one doomed to destruction..." (John 17:11-12).

We have complete protection against the Evil One as we trust in the blood of Jesus Christ. When Christ died and shed His own precious blood, He won the victory over Satan and all his hosts. You can claim the blood of Jesus as your protection at any moment (2 Tim 4:18). He has given you His victory to exercise as your own (1 Cor 15:57).

Jesus taught His disciples to pray, "Deliver us (away) from the Evil One..." (Matt 6:13). Trust Christ as your Savior and you will have His blood to cover you and protect you against all Satan's attacks. "No power that comes against you will prosper," God said to His people (Isaiah 54:17). If you are a Christian, you have God's Word of promise!



TALK ABOUT

1. What does Satan do to keep men and women in darkness (2 Cor 4:4)?
2. What does God's word tells us to do (James 4:7)?
3. Have you resisted Satan in the name of Jesus?
4. When we fall into sin, what must we do (1 John 1:9)?

SATAN DOES NOT GIVE UP

Even after we receive Jesus as our Savior, Satan does not stop tempting us. Temptation comes from our own evil hearts. Every man is tempted, when he is

SATAN AND HIS DEMONS

God has told us all we know about the spirit world.

1. God is Spirit. He created a spirit world, a world that is separate from our physical world. We cannot see the world of spirits, but it is just as real as the physical world we can see (Isaiah 42:5; Eph 3:9-11).
2. The Bible tells of two 'hosts' of spirit beings, angels and demon spirits. All spirits, good or evil, know God and fear Him (Jas 2:19).
3. Demon spirits are ruled by Satan (John 12:31). They come and go in our world and seek to control it.
4. Angels and demon spirits were created intelligent beings.
5. All through history, Satan has fought to establish his kingdom in the hearts of men and to keep them from knowing the living God (2 Cor 4:4).
6. Christ died on the cross to destroy Satan and his works (Heb 2:14-15). He defeated Satan and his evil spirits at Calvary. Christ's power in the earth is greater than Satan's power (Col 2:15).
7. God wants all men to be 'saved' and to know the truth (2 Peter 3:9). The truth sets our spirits free from Satan's control (John 8:34).
8. When men trust Christ as their Savior from sin, they receive God's Spirit who enables them to overcome Satan (Jude 24). Christians have God's power to stand against Satan and his demons (Luke 9:1; Rom 12:21; 1 John 2:14; Rev 12:11).
9. Angels are messengers who stand in the presence of God (1 Kings 22:19; Ps 89:7). They are sent to minister to God's children (Heb 1:14).



TALK ABOUT

1. What is man's state without God?
2. Who blinds our eyes to the truth (2 Cor 4:4)?
3. What do we know about angels (Heb 1:14)?
4. Is Satan free to come and go in the earth?
5. What is God's will for all people?

PRINCE OF THE POWER OF THE AIR

Jesus spoke of "the devil and his angels." He called Satan, "the prince of this world" (John 12:31). But He did not give up His authority for the authority of the devil. When Jesus died on the cross, He won a great victory over Satan (Heb 2:15). Because of Christ's victory, God can forgive us all our sins and give us a free pardon (Romans 8:1).

Jesus' power is greater than Satan's power and Jesus commanded evil spirits to go out of people. These evil spirits knew who Jesus was. They spoke to Him and they always obeyed His commands (Luke 8:32-33).

IN THE COMMUNITY

On the other hand, men who rule well in their home, rule well in the community. Men who "indulge in much wine," lose their ability to judge fairly and act kindly. Wine may have helped stomach ailments in Paul's day, but it inflicts pain and much suffering on families today.

In India, we walked with a Pastor up a short street in the city of Pune. It was a slum area of the city and the Pastor pointed out five wine shops in the one short block. We were in a slum area of the city in India. Soon we arrived at the home he wished to visit.

Only the wife was at home in the small tin shack. The Pastor explained that the church has tried to help her and her two girls, but every time they gave her money, the husband took it to a wine shop and spent it. Consequently, he could not hold down a job or support his family.

THE DEMON OF ALCOHOL

Most alcoholics will acknowledge that alcohol is promoted by demon spirits. They tempt even the youngest among us. College students binge drink until they make themselves sick.

A testimony from a young man saved from alcohol was new to us. He told how God rescued him from the demon of alcohol because of the prayers of a very elderly saint in the church.

If you have a friend who is bound by alcohol, pray for them and ask their permission to pray with them. Ask others to join you; make a prayer pact not to give up until you see God work to save that person.



TALK ABOUT

1. Who should call for the elders to anoint a sick person and pray for God to heal them?
2. Should we call a special person to pray for the sick?
3. Is prayer better than medicine?
4. Can prayer help those who are possessed by the demon of alcohol?



Read: Ephesians 5:22-33

HUSBANDS, LOVE YOUR WIVES

God created men and women equal, but sin spoiled this relationship. Only "in Christ" can men see women as their equal and have the proper respect for them.

God has given the husband to be the head of his wife and children. They, in turn have to respect his God-given role their husband and father as their head. God has given the husband all the authority he needs to lead a loyal and godly family.

Husbands are told to love their wives "as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself up for her welfare."

PEACE BETWEEN BROTHERS

Paul knew there could be no peace in the churches if there was no peace in the home. In the Church, husbands and wives are to be "subject one to another," not one ruling over the other at home or in church.

God created men and women in His image, "male and female created He them" (Gen 1:27). Adam and Eve were equal in rebelling against God in the Garden of Eden and equal in the fall. When Eve sinned, both were cut off from God and put out of the garden (Gal 3:23).

While He was with them, Jesus told the parable of the mustard seed (Mark 4:30-34). It is the tiniest of seeds, but grows into one of the largest bushes in the garden. Jesus used the idea to tell the disciples that the kingdom of God began very small, but would grow and grow until it filled the whole earth.

In God's sight, "There is neither male nor female..." (Gal 3:28). This has nothing to do with the role of father or mother. It is a matter of the person's relationship to God and to the other person.

The head of Christ is God, yet Father and Son are equal (1 Cor 11:3). Jesus Christ is Head of His family, the Church,. So, in like manner, God put man at the head of his family to love and lead them by example and teaching in the things of God.

Headship means power to care, not to crush. It means loving our wives and children as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself up for her (Eph 5:25). Sadly, men fall so far short, if that is God's goal for His children!

Sin in men's hearts has caused them to selfishly rule over women. Men have made women slaves to their passions. Jesus brought freedom to women. He honored women and spoke to them when no Jewish man would do this (John 4:9).

LOVE AS CHRIST LOVED

"Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us" (Eph 5:25). He did this every day of His life, not just once at Calvary..

- a. He gave up heaven's glory and power to become a man (Phil 2:7).
- b. He gave up His rights and the comforts of a home.
- c. He gave up His right to marry and have a family.
- d. He gave up His right to privacy, to have time alone
- e. He gave up His right to a fair trial (Isaiah 53:7).
- f. He gave up life itself.

For a Christian this means 'dying' to self, so that we can give ourselves to God. Wives and mothers, through the centuries, know what it is to 'die' to what they want for their family's sake. Wives and mothers must 'die' to what they want,



Read: Acts 20:7-12

THE APOSTLES' AUTHORITY OVER DEATH

It was the first day of the week and the believers kept it as a day of worship and rest. That was Paul's last night to share God's word with these believers at Troas. They had come together to break bread. In other Scriptures this is called "the Lord's Table." And they gathered "on the Lord's Day" (Rev 1:10).

They gathered in a large, upper room and, because it was his last sermon to them "Paul kept on talking until after midnight" (Acts 20:7).

A young man sat in the window listening to all that Paul said. But the warm night and the smoke from the burning lamps overcame him and he fell out of the window. Those who were near the stairway ran down and lifted him in their arms. He was dead.

Paul went down and put his arms around the young man's body. "Don't be alarmed," he said, "he is alive." Life had come back into the young man's body and everyone rejoiced. Paul went back upstairs and preached until daylight. The people took the young man home alive and they were greatly comforted"(Acts 20:10-12).

God is please to give life and He knows when to take life. In the early church God gave this authority to the apostles and we never read of Him taking it back.



Read: Ephesians 6:10-18

SPIRITUAL RULERS IN HIGH PLACES

Paul set the stage of life for all Christians when he wrote, "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power...For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms" (Eph 6:10-12).

This makes it plain to all that the battle is a spiritual one. We can't see the enemy with our physical eyes. But we experience his presence. Yes, Satan uses our circumstances to make us feel down or sad or hopeless. He is a super craftsman at spreading depression and discouragement.

If you are not trusting Jesus Christ as your Savior, you are one of Satan's slaves (Rom 6:16). You may believe you are your own master, making your own decisions, but Satan has his own way of deceiving you (2 Cor 4:4).

When you feel discouraged, take up your Bible and read God's promises. Ask others to pray with you. There is no better way to encourage each other than to read and pray together (1 Thess 4:18).



Read: John 11:1-44

GOD'S TIME IS NOT OUR TIME

When Lazarus was sick, Mary and Martha sent for Jesus. He was with His disciples, on the other side of the Jordan River, two day's walk from Bethany where Martha lived.

Jesus did not go at once and Lazarus died. Oh, if Jesus had not delayed, they wailed. Now it was too late. But Jesus assured them that all would be well. "It is for God's glory," He told them. But how could that be – Lazarus dead and buried and no help from the Master?

Of them all, Martha was the only one who had faith. She told Jesus, "I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world" (John 11:27). She believed Jesus' words when He said, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in Me will never die."

Martha believed. She took authority over death. She knew this body would turn to dust, but the spirit, which returns to God, will never die (Eccl 12:7), and there it will enjoy heaven's bliss forever.

CHRIST'S AUTHORITY OVER DEATH

Christ took authority over death. He said, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I am going to wake him up." Jesus faced a dead Lazarus, yet only a thin veil separated Jesus from His friend. For us, too, the hope of the resurrection should make it as easy to put off this old 'tent' and die as it is to put off our clothes and go to sleep (Matthew Henry).

Jesus "was moved in His spirit and troubled." Oh that every person who stood weeping might understand. Jesus would die to defeat death. If they would only believe! "For whoever lives and believes in Me (Jesus) will never die."

He ordered those who stood by, "Take away the stone from the tomb."

Martha objected, "But Lord, he has been three four days..." But those who stood by obeyed.

Jesus looked up to heaven and prayed, "Father, I thank You that You have heard Me...You always hear Me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that You sent Me" (John 11:40-42).

Then Jesus called in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out." At that, Lazarus stood up and walked out of the tomb.

"Take off the grave clothes and let him go," Jesus commanded. And they fellowshiped together once more.

for their family's sake. Servants give up their own wishes and serve their Master (Luke 17:7-10). We are called to be servants of Jesus Christ.



TALK ABOUT

1. How much did Christ love the Church (Eph 5:25)?
2. How is the Christian Church like the marriage of man and woman?
3. How should husbands love their wives? What does this mean in practical, everyday living?
4. Should we 'present ourselves to God' once, at salvation, or we may do this every day (Rom 12:1-2)?
5. The Bible says God created man to be 'head'. What does this mean (1 Cor 11:3)?



Read: Ephesians 1:15-23

IDENTIFIED WITH CHRIST

Christians are identified with their Savior in every part of their lives. You are being made like Jesus. You are being made like Him even now. When He comes to gather all His people to Himself, they will be like Him in their resurrected bodies and they will know Him, even as He knows them (1 Cor 13:12).

This was the hope that drove Paul on. And it gives us that same power of the Holy Spirit to overcome Satan and all his henchmen. Paul prayed for the Christian at Ephesus that they might know fully the hope to which Christ had called them (Eph 1:18). And that they might know the power that is theirs (and ours) to stand against the temptations of the Evil One.

We share in Christ's sufferings. Paul wrote, "For just as the sufferings of Christ flow over into our lives, so also through Christ our comfort overflows" (2 Cor 1:5).

We cannot live the Christian life in our own strength. We must claim the blood of Jesus as our protection. As we are clothed with Christ, so we are kept strong. Take time each morning to kneel before Almighty God and thank Him for being with you through the day.

ARE YOU QUALIFIED TO ASK?

A lad, enrolled in a Bible correspondence course, wrote this question to his instructor: "Do you have to be a bishop first before you can be pope?"

In some denominations, only certain people have authority to lead in worship, to baptize or marry or bury the dead. "But the Bible says "Jesus Christ has made us a kingdom of priests to serve His God and Father..." (Revelation 1:6). Christ is our High Priest. He has made all believers priests and we serve God under the control of the Holy Spirit (1 Peter 2:5,9). This is a great privilege.

God chose the tribe of Levi to serve Him in the tabernacle and to guard it. The Levites cared for the holy things and kept unholy things out of God's house (Num 3:5-10). They stood before God on behalf of the people

Now every Christian is told to serve God in this way. You do not have to belong to any tribe or group; but you must belong to Christ. Only then can you offer sacrifices of praise and pray with authority.



TALK ABOUT

1. What work did the Levites do?
2. What does "a kingdom of priests" mean to you?
3. Christians can come directly into God's presence. How is this possible?
4. What does God command all Christians to do (Matt 28:19-20)?

AUTHORITY TO PRAY FOR OTHERS

It takes a lot of time and patience to pray for our brothers and sisters in the faith. This is the greatest 'work' of all. We dare not stop doing this.

James wrote, "The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective" (James 5:16). A child would not ask as strange and God does not promise to answer the prayers of strangers. In the words of James, the prayers of the righteous are heard and answered.

The righteous man is not without sin. Rather, as David of old, he is quick to recognize sin in his life and confess it before God. David wrote, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me" (Psalm 66:18).

The prophet Isaiah told the people Israel, "Surely the arm of the Lord is not too short to save, nor His ear too dull to hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear" (Isaiah 59:1-2).

PRAY IN THE NAME

Jesus said, "I will do whatever you ask in My name...." (John 14:13). Few of us have known men whose name everyone recognized. The world may equate their name with power, but not power to do anything you ask.

Jesus is the name with supreme power. The angel told Joseph, "She will give birth to a son, and you are to give Him the name Jesus, because He will save His people from their sins" (Matt 1:21).

God said of Jesus, "God exalted Him to the highest place and gave Him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow... and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil 2:9-11).



Read: Matthew 6:5-16 and 7:7-29

PRAY IN THE SPIRIT

Prayer is one of the great mysteries of the Christian life. God knows what we need; He has already provided everything we need, but He wants us to ask Him. Why? He is our Father; fathers want their children to ask

Paul begged the Christians to pray for him "and for all the saints" (Eph 6:18). I often wonder just what Paul had in mind. Did he mean a blanket prayer like, "Dear God, please bless all the saints." Or did he mean the ones in our immediate circle of friends?

Those who have Christ as their Savior have the Holy Spirit. He is our powerful partner in prayer. He not only shows our feeble mind what to pray for, but He prays for us. He shakes out all that is selfish or offending and rings our prayer to the Father (Rom 8:26-28).

He searches our hearts (meaning our spirits) and actually intercedes for us. This guarantees the success of our prayers, for God does not deny the Spirit, who is God. What a comfort to know that He ever lives to make intercession for the saints.

By nature men rush full speed ahead. They do not wait on God to know His will for them, for that day or for that occasion.

THE PRAYER OF FAITH

Pray in faith, believing... James said, "The prayer of faith will heal the sick" (James 5:15). Jesus said, "If you have faith as small as a mustard seed (one of the smallest seeds), you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there' and it will move" (Matt 17:20-21).

Many times when Jesus healed a sick person, He said to them, "Your faith has healed you" (Mark 5:34). The prayer of faith and a life of faith are closely connected. Christians "walk by faith" or "live by faith." The Christian life is a life of faith from beginning to end (Rom 1:17).

God wants to move mountains of difficulty for us, but we are too self-confident to ask and we have no faith to receive. Jesus said, "If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer" (Matt 21:22).

We grow in faith, just as we grow in grace (2 Peter 3:18). Boldness comes from knowing God's will; being persuaded that He is able to do that which we have committed to Him in our prayer.