

Authority Over the Powers

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A Manual For Growth in the Body of Christ

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- Growth in Christ involves walking in our victory in Christ. Growth happens as we fight the good fight of faith.
- Growth happens through spiritual conflict in which the old dies and the new comes to life.
- In this conflict there are powers arrayed against us. God wants us to know that we have authority over these powers through Jesus Christ.

In the New Testament, the word "powers" generally means "unclean spirits" - evil forces that go beyond our own personal evil. In this manual the word "powers" designates all evil forces that influence us. We will examine the "powers" and our authority over them in Christ.

1 Basically Warped: The Power of the Flesh

Key Verse: *Live by the Spirit, I say, and do not gratify the desires of the flesh.* (Galatians 5:16)

- Romans 7:14-25
- Romans 8:3-14
- Galatians 5:16-25

The Power: The Flesh

We sin because we are sinners. We live in a condition of sin. St.Paul calls this condition "the flesh." At the heart of this condition is idolatry - We play at being god. From this condition we experience:

- disoriented desires
- misdirected values
- distorted attitudes

In this condition, when we "do what comes naturally" we sin. We carry this Warped State of Being like a corpse on our backs. It tempts, seduces and influences.

The Authority: Christ's Victory

For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. 6 To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. (Romans 8:5-6)

Habitually giving into the flesh only further entrenches us in sin and makes us increasingly vulnerable to other forms of evil.

Libertinism is not the answer.

Our authority over the flesh is not in the flesh. (The Pharisees tried. St. Paul tried. See Philippians 3:1-9)

Legalism is not the answer.

Our authority is in the Spirit. Christ's victory comes to us through the power of the Holy Spirit. Set your mind on the Spirit. Rely on the Spirit. Be led by the Spirit.

Live under God's mercy!

1. When you try to do what is right in your own power and strength what happens?
2. Give examples of the experience of "the flesh" in your life?
3. Share your victories.

2 Willfully Sinful: The Power of Personal Sin

Key Verse:

For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. 20 Ever since the creation of the world his eternal power and divine nature, invisible though they are, have been understood and seen through the things he has made. So they are without excuse; 21 for though they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their senseless minds were darkened. 22 Claiming to be wise, they became fools; 23 and they exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling a mortal human being or birds or four-footed animals or reptiles. 24 Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the degrading of their bodies among themselves, 25 because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped

and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever!
Amen. (Romans 1:19-25)

We sin because we are sinners. We sin because we live in a condition of sin. But We Sin! We make decisions. We are responsible for our actions. Our actions come from our decisions.

The Power: Personal Sin

- We choose our idols!
- We decide about ourselves - what we will do and what we will become!
- We are responsible for what we have done and what we have left undone.
- The power to choose has become the power to run away from God.
- Habitually choosing to run away from God even when we hear the invitation to “Open the door” to Jesus, entrenches us more deeply into evil.

The enemy held my will; and of it he made a chain and bound me. Because my will was perverse, it changed to lust, and lust yielded - to become habit, and habit not resisted became necessity. These were like links hanging one on another - which is why I have called it a chain - and their hard bondage held me bound hand and foot. (Augustine, Confessions)

The Authority: Repentance and Faith

- The gift of faith through the power of the Holy Spirit is the gift of again choosing to trust our lives to God.
- God’s Mercy Means Our Forgiveness
- God’s Mercy Also Means Authority Over Willfulness
- Read Romans 6:1-11

What then are we to say? Should we continue in sin in order that grace may abound? 2 By no means! How can we who died to sin go on living in it? 3 Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4 Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.

1. Can you identify decisions you have made that kept you from doing the thing you were called to do?
2. Can you think of times when you did not see what you were to do? What was getting in the way?
3. Who sets our wills free from the bondage to sin? Share your victories.

3 Worldly Influences: The Power of Environmental Triggers

Key Verses:

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect. (Romans 12:2)

Thus he has given us, through these things, his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may escape from the corruption that is in the world because of lust, and may become participants of the divine nature. (2 Peter 1:4)

Do not love the world or the things in the world. The love of the Father is not in those who love the world; 16 for all that is in the world—the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eyes, the pride in riches—comes not from the Father but from the world. 17 And the world and its desire are passing away, but those who do the will of God live forever. (1 John 2:15)

The Power: The World

- Addicts must give care to “triggers.” People, places and things.
 - Sinners must give care to “triggers.” People, places and things.
 - We live in an environment of racism, materialism, hedonism, sexism....
1. What are some of the triggers that you daily encounter - at work, home, TV, magazines, movies, shopping mall.
 2. Where do we find our authority over the triggers of our environment?

The Authority: The Cross of Christ

May I never boast of anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. (Galatians 6:14)

1. What does it mean to be crucified to the world?
2. How can I die to the world?
3. Why is being “in Christ” so important?
4. What triggers in your life do you want to have authority over today?
5. What steps are you taking?

4 Bearing the Consequences: The Power of Past Sins

Key Verse:

Happy are those whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.
2 Happy are those to whom the LORD imputes no iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit. 3 While I kept silence, my body wasted away through my groaning all day long. 4 For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer. 5 Then I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not hide my

iniquity; I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD," and you forgave the guilt of my sin. (Psalm 32:1-5)

The Power: Past Sin and Guilt

- Feelings of guilt and condemnation rob us of joy.
- The experience of guilt effects our whole self: While I kept silence, my body wasted away through groaning all day long.
- Unacknowledged guilt is often expressed in self-righteousness and judgmentalism. We become joyless and critical.
- Guilt feelings blind us to God's grace and loving guidance.
- What do you feel guilty about? (Consider also those things in your past that you tend to rationalize when they come to mind.)

The Authority: Confession and Forgiveness

God's forgiveness sets us free from the debilitating bondage of guilt: *In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace that he lavished on us.* (Ephesians 1:7-8)

Steps to take:

1. Acknowledge the guilt.
 2. Accept God's forgiveness.
 3. Where possible, make amends.
- Guilt loses its power when it is acknowledged and forgiven.
 - Past decisions still have consequences. (An adultery may have ended in a broken marriage that we could not go back and fix.) Those consequences are often borne as a cross, but there is healing for us in the cross. We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose. (Romans 8:28) We have a future and a hope.

5 Suffering Abuse: The Power of Past Hurts

Key Verse: *This one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus.* (Philippians 3:13-14)

The Power: Past Hurts

For the first 15 years of Billy Hawkins' life, he was labeled by his teachers as "educable mentally retarded." That meant "special education" - and a stigma that too often in America was a passport to failure. Things changed for Hawkins one crisp night 23 years ago. A backup quarterback, Hawkins came in off the bench and rallied his team from far behind. In the stands, the principal watched the high school sophomore in amazement. The "retarded kid" could play. He ran complicated plays; he clearly had a gift for the game. Soon after, the principal had Hawkins enrolled in regular classes, his teachers instructed to give him extra help. Today, Billy Hawkins is 39. He holds a Ph.D. and is the associate dean of the school of education at Michigan's Ferris State University. (*U.S. News and World Report*, December 13, 1993)

- The sins of others affect us:
 1. Being called "stupid" as a child.
 2. Emotional and physical abuse.
 3. Stereotypes of racism.
- Parenting methods can build up or tear down.
- Teaching techniques can help or hinder.
- Our past can determine our present feelings about ourselves and our decisions and actions.

St. Paul had been trained in religious framework of self-righteousness. He came to know God's healing and forgiveness. He came to have authority over past hurts, so that he could forget what lay behind him and press on for the future God has for him.

What are some of the hurts of your past that need healing?

The Authority: Healing of Memories

Jesus is our healer.

1. The past does not just go away. It remains with us. When there are festering wounds, the past sometimes continues to be experienced in the form of physical and emotional ailments.
2. Let Jesus enter into the past which you still carry with you. Let him speak to that past. Let him release you from the hurts. Many times that includes letting him forgive you for your part in past hurts. Your decisions when hurt often produced further hurt.
3. Use your imagination in prayer.
4. List the people you feel have hurt you. Recall things said and done that still cause pain. Bring situations before the Lord in prayer. Imagine yourself back in the situation. Prayerfully imagine Jesus there also. What does he say to you in the past situation that you are imagining?
5. Forgive the person who hurt you.
6. Confess your sins also and let Jesus forgive you.

6 Body Battles: The Power of Disease

Key Verses:

Great crowds came to him, bringing with them the lame, the maimed, the blind, the mute, and many others. They put them at his feet, and he cured them, 31 so that the crowd was amazed when they saw the mute speaking, the maimed whole, the lame walking, and the blind seeing. And they praised the God of Israel. (Matthew 15:30-31)

Are any among you suffering? They should pray. Are any cheerful? They should sing songs of praise. 14 Are any among you sick? They should call for the elders of the church and have them pray over them, anointing them with oil in the name of the Lord. 15 The prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise them up; and anyone who has committed sins will be forgiven. 16 Therefore confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective. (James 5:13-16)

The Power: Physical Dis-ease

Jesus views physical illness as belonging to the dominion of the Evil One. Whether physical illness has spiritual or emotional roots, whether it involves a break down of the immune system and physical disorders, it is seen as something from which people are to be delivered. Jesus heals people because he has compassion on them. We are to continue the ministry of Jesus through the church, the body of Jesus, because we have compassion on people.

The Authority: The Prayer of Faith

The prayer of faith goes to the heart of our authority over disease.

- Physical touch, laying on of hands and anointing with oil, is often important.
- The speaking of a word of the Lord or word of knowledge.
- The ministry of discernment.

Jesus sometimes heals through laying on of hands, sometimes through a word spoken, sometimes through an action. At the heart of the healing is the prayer of faith.

Reasons Why People Are Not Healed:

1. Lack of faith.
2. Redemptive suffering.

3. A false value attached to suffering.
4. Sin.
5. Not praying specifically. (Especially for inner healing).
6. Faulty diagnosis. (Example: Praying for physical healing when inner healing is needed.)
7. Refusal to see medicine as a way God heals.
8. Not using the natural means of preserving health.
9. Now is not the time.
10. A different person is to be the instrument of healing.
11. The social environment prevents healing from taking place. (Francis MacNutt, *Healing*, pp. 248-261)

7 Social Sickness: The Power of Sinful Structures

Key Verses:

At that very hour some Pharisees came and said to him, "Get away from here, for Herod wants to kill you." 32 He said to them, "Go and tell that fox for me, 'Listen, I am casting out demons and performing cures today and tomorrow, and on the third day I finish my work.'" (Luke 13:31-32)

"The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses' seat....They tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on the shoulders of others; but they themselves are unwilling to lift a finger to move them." (Matthew 23:2-4)

But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream. (Amos 5:24)

The Power: Evil, Unjust Systems

Often hidden influences, they nevertheless exert relentless power.

- Unjust, inequitable funding of public education
- Unrepresentative government
- Discriminatory hiring practices
- Discriminatory housing practices
- Discrimination in the availability of health services
- Unjust criminal justice system
- Biased sentencing of convicted persons
- Corporate environmental pollution
- The National Security State
- Unjust and Corrupt Ecclesiastical Structures

The Authority: Doing Justice in Jesus' Name

- Making right that which is wrong.
- Being witnesses to that which is God's intentions for humankind.
- Taking up our cross: Losing our lives for the sake of Christ and the Gospel.

Romans 13 - A Call to Activism

Matthew 5 - Actively Confronting the Powers

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. 9 Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. 10 Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' [justice'] sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 11 Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. 12 Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you. 13 You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything, but is thrown out and trampled under foot.

8 Devilish Dominion: The Power of Unclean Spirits

Key Verse:

For our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. (Ephesians 6:12)

The Power: Evil that Goes Beyond Our Own

There is both a "Now and Then" about our situation!

Now And when you were dead in trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive together with him, when he forgave us all our

trespasses, 14 erasing the record that stood against us with its legal demands. He set this aside, nailing it to the cross. 15 He disarmed the rulers and authorities and made a public example of them, triumphing over them in it. (Colossians 2:13-15)

Then Then comes the end, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father, after he has destroyed every ruler and every authority and power. 25 For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. 26 The last enemy to be destroyed is death. 27 For “God has put all things in subjection under his feet.” But when it says, “All things are put in subjection,” it is plain that this does not include the one who put all things in subjection under him. (1 Corinthians 15:24-27)

It Depends On Our Relationship With Christ

You were dead through the trespasses and sins 2 in which you once lived, following the course of this world, following the ruler of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work among those who are disobedient. 3 All of us once lived among them in the passions of our flesh, following the desires of flesh and senses, and we were by nature children of wrath, like everyone else. (Ephesians 2:1-3)

Once we have come to live in Christ, we live in Christ's triumph!

The Status of the Church of Christ

I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him, 18 so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints, 19 and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe, according to the working of his great power. 20 God put this power to work in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, 21 far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the age to come. 22 And he has put all things under his feet

and has made him the head over all things for the church, 23 which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all. (Ephesians 1:17-23)

1. What is demonic influence?
2. What is the role of the devil in Scripture? In our lives?
3. What is spiritual warfare?

Comments on recent spiritual warfare ideas:

- Territorial Spirits
- Levels of Warfare
- Binding and Loosing
- “Names” of Spirits

What are we to pray concerning the devil?

The Authority: Christ’s Victory

Basic Christianity:

God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself. (2 Corinthians 5) He has rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son, (Colossians 1:13)

- God has rescued us!
- We have been transferred!
- Therefore, live and walk as rescued, transferred people.
- Our victory over the Evil One is entirely dependent upon God’s victory already obtained for us through Christ.

Therefore:

- Pray
- Trust in God. Trust in what God has accomplished through Jesus Christ
- Walk by the Spirit
- Walk in obedience to the Word
- Exercise authority in the name of Jesus Christ
- Intercede on behalf of others through prayer

Three Examples of Authority Over the Powers

- Acts 8:4-25
- Acts 13:4-11
- Acts 19:8-20

About Casting Out Spirits

9 Conclusions

The Foundation for Victory

According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building on it. Each builder must choose with care how to build on it. 11 For no one can lay any foundation other than the one that has been laid; that foundation is Jesus Christ. 12 Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw— 13 the work of each builder will become visible, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each has done. 14 If what has been built on the foundation survives, the builder will receive a reward. 15 If the work is burned up, the builder will suffer

loss; the builder will be saved, but only as through fire. (1 Corinthians 3:10-15)

1. The foundation is Jesus Christ alone. If we attempt to take authority over the powers on any other basis than Jesus Christ, we will fail.
2. Authority is given the church of Jesus Christ as it is dependent on its foundation.
3. When we build on the foundation, it must be with material that is appropriate to the foundation.
4. Our attempts to build up the church without prayer and dependence on the Spirit is like building with straw, hay or wood.
5. Building the church in the power and the gifts of the Spirit is like building with gold, silver and precious stones.

The Primary Signs of Victory

1. One (The Unity of the Body of Christ)
2. Holy (Set Apart for God's Purposes)
3. Catholic ("Universal": For All People)
4. Apostolic (In keeping with the witness of the Apostles and therefore the Bible)

The Tools for Ministering Victory

Gifts and Ministries of the Spirit

Primary Gifts

- Faith
- Hope
- Love

Secondary Gifts and Forms of Ministry

- Romans 12
- 1 Corinthians 12
- Ephesians 4

Final Notes

1. Ministries, and Gifts for Ministry
2. Walking in the Victory
3. Prayer-Faith-Obedience
4. Worship-Praise-Thanksgiving
5. Sacramental Living
6. Meditation on God's Word
7. Bible Study
8. Simplicity
9. Exercising Our Calling / Using Our Gifts
10. In the World But Not of the World
11. Being Witnesses: Speaking the Truth in Love

Authority Over the Powers

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