

CHURCH RULES TODAY?

LUKE 10:17 And the seventy returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name." [18] And He said to them, **"I was watching Satan fall from heaven like lightning.** [19] "Behold, I have given you authority to tread upon serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall injure you.

HEB 2:14 Since then the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that **through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil;**

JOHN 20:22 And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. [23] **"If you forgive the sins of any, their sins have been forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they have been retained."**

For these and many other scriptures it should be clear that God intends for the Church to rule and not Satan. The church has surely been given authority over Satan, evil spirits and demons but she still must exercise that authority and enforce the victory of Calvary on the principalities, powers, the world forces of darkness and the spiritual forces of wickedness. The church has been assigned this duty of spiritual warfare and subduing the forces of the enemies of God. Psalm 8:2] From the mouth of infants and nursing babes Thou hast established strength,

Because of Thine (His) adversaries, To make the enemy and the revengeful cease.

EPH 6:12] For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.

While the armor in the next verses seem to be primarily defensive, the revelation is that the warfare is very real and dangerous to those who are not equipped. This conflict is between the church and Satan and his legions. We could logically ask why God left Satan here to torment, deceive and afflict the church. If God had locked Satan up at the resurrection the church could have evangelized the whole world and become the dominate factor in ruling the world.

The church has at this time all the God given authority, wisdom and power to escape from Satan's bondage, oppression and lies and to initiate an offensive action against him and his forces of darkness. If the church was effective in utilizing what God has given her, much more of the world would be delivered and standing in salvation and working on God's side to deliver others. Then why hasn't the church been effective in this effort since the scriptures are clear about her authority??

The deception is: An offensive action is not (at this time) convenient because we are involved with so many other matters that take all our time.

In addition to that there is a concept in the church that if we leave Satan alone he will leave us

alone. Even if that were true he will not leave the unsaved alone and voluntarily release them to respond to the gospel message. God's method of church growth is to reach the unsaved rather than members of other churches with the message of salvation.

EPH 1:19] and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might [20] which He brought about 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 every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in the one to come. [22] And He put all things in subjection under His feet,** and gave Him as head over all things to the church, [23] which is His body, *the fulness of Him who fills all in all.*

The fact that God has already set Jesus Christ in the highest authority in the universe and that He is now ruling, reveals that God fully intends for Him to rule in the present tense. The next statement reveals how He is going to do it! By becoming the existing authority and ruling Head of the church. This very clearly says that the church is the fulness of Him who fills all in all, the fulness of Christ. That means that Christ is present within His body! In other words when Christ is the active Head and ruling King of the church which is His body, He will direct the church into spiritual battle that will be victorious with His victory. Then why isn't the church enjoying this overcoming victory?? It must be because she is either ignorant or lazy or has something more important to do!!

I believe the church is simply ignorant of how to do it. Most everyone knows the doctrine of prayer and hundreds of books have been written about spiritual warfare but very few actually experience the reality of overcoming prayer, dominion, power and authority that has been given to the church. Everyone knows how to carry signs and protest against the darkness but not many know how to pray effectively to remove the darkness.

In the recent youth camp (June 1998) we saw the power of consistent and prevailing prayer overcome the objections to the gospel. The power of the enemy was overcome and the Holy Spirit broke through from the first day onward. From all appearances and according to the testimony of the cabin leaders everyone of the older youth left the camp born again. Then would this same principle of prayer work over a geographical area? Would it be possible to be so effective in prayer that a whole area could be saved the same way? How about our own household?

Song of Songs 6:8 "There are sixty queens and eighty concubines, And maidens without number; [9] But my dove, my perfect one, is unique: She is her mother's only daughter;

She is the pure child of the one who bore her. The maidens saw her and called her blessed,

The queens and the concubines also, and they praised her, saying, SS 6:10 'Who is this that **grows like the dawn,** As beautiful as the full moon, As pure as the sun, *As awesome as an army with banners?'*

Most Bible scholars agree this is speaking of the bride of Christ and one of her characteristics is that she is awesome like an army with banners. She has a whole military side that marches like a victorious army. The true church that is functioning according to God's design will be a very militant or even violent people when it comes to God's enemies. The wisdom and guidance for this "military machine" will be the Lord Jesus Christ Himself who is the guiding Head of the body. All this makes nice talk and is received with many hallelujahs but to be effective in enforcing the authority of the Lord Jesus upon the powers of darkness and causing them to cease is much more than a Christian cliché or another Sunday School lesson.

We should wonder why God has designed this whole activity of prayer in the first place since it seems to be ineffective and confused. There surely must be a great difference between prayer (where God is contacted) and spiritual warfare (where evil powers are contacted). It seems that most of the time we are praying and asking God to do something about the enemy or sickness or oppression or the devil's harassment.

The confusion seems to be when to ask God for something or to do something and when to attack the enemy and drive him out through spiritual warfare. While the "prayer part" is still not very effective the "spiritual warfare part" is practically non-existent. The church is not troubling the devil very often or very much and he is very much free to do as he pleases. Carrying signs and protesting the evil is not troubling the enemy because he just uses that for his own publicity and promote the evil and make more people aware of it.

It should be clear that the number one priority for the church (our church) is to develop efficiency and effectiveness in spiritual warfare. Mat 16:18] "And I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades shall not overpower it. [19] "I will give you **the keys of the kingdom of heaven**; and whatever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

MAT 18:18] "**Truly I say to you, whatever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.** [19] "Again I say to you, that if two of you agree on earth about anything that they may ask, it shall be done for them by My Father who is in heaven. [20] "**For** (because) where two or three have gathered together in My name, **there I am in their midst.**"

The church is not just a "organization" presided over by the president, Jesus Christ, who is

the C.E.O. of the corporation. It is not just a "kingdom" ruled over from heaven and that is visited occasionally by the "leader". The real church is a "living being" (called a body) that is made up of various parts and members that have co-ordinating functions. The real church is a complex structure of interdependent members that are subordinate to each other. Each member's relationship to the whole is determined by its function in the whole. Each member is designed to carry on various activities of life that complement and support every other member. All body functions are a matter of "LIFE" and not a matter of "mechanics." Since all the "Life" comes from the Head and all function originates from the Head, the whole body functions as "one whole being". Jesus Christ is not the leader or the president or the C.E.O. He is the Head that designs

and affects the structure of His body. He is the Life source and the “food” for the body. He is the constitutional unit of the whole that develops the living manner and function of the rest of the body. The HEAD constitutes the law by which the government of the body functions. The body does not originate action but responds to the direction of the Head. The whole body then is an administrative structure to promote the united effort of obedience to the Head.

All these definitions can go on and on but fall far short of describing the mystical relationship between the Head and the body. They can only serve to alert us to the “organic” connection between the two parts. A “C.E.O”. may function very effectively but he is still not linked to the corporation by life in an organic relationship. Since there is nothing on earth that functions in this way we can’t give a natural example that is fully accurate. We can say “God is with us” but that is so pitiful in explaining Christ’s relationship to the church. We can say “He is in us and we are in Him” but that goes right over our head in it’s eternal importance to our function in the here and now. However, this “organic connection” is the basis of all prayer and spiritual warfare because that is where our inspiration and authority originates. Our “connection” to Christ is our connection to the Father and the Holy Spirit and is the basis of our inspiration, our revelation, our ministry and our anointing.

To say “the church is an organization” is so pathetic because it reduces the “church” to the irrelevant. To say “the church is His body” is to repeat a Christian cliché that has no power because it has no revelation. To spiritually understand and then say “the church is His body and He is the Head” is the most powerful thing we can utter when it comes by revelation. To say

“Christ and His body are ‘organic’ means that we are organs in His body” but that also sounds so pitiful when we understand what God has done in the eternal realms.

For these reasons the first thing we should pray for is the revelation of Christ’s body, the church! If we have even a small revelation we would fear to “rule over His body” because we would understand that is the sole function of the Head. The true “eunuch” will be very careful to protect and keep the “bride church” for Christ alone and not impregnate his life into the church.

This revelation of the “Head and His body” is essential to spiritual warfare. The reason should be apparent. The authority comes from the Head. This still doesn’t answer the question of why God has designed this “scheme of prayer and spiritual warfare” for the church as possibly the most important function for this time period. The only answer that comes to mind is that this is all part of the training process of developing the church for her eternal role of “wife and companion” of the Lord Jesus Christ. This includes being co-sovereign with Him, both now and in eternity.

From all this it is clear that because of the Life-organic relationship with the Head, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the church’s elevation to the throne of God that the power and authority over the earth belongs to the church and not to Satan! This was Derek Prince’s theme for the Intercessors of America convention in Cleveland 1998. He said that because of the authority that Christ has given to the church over the affairs of earth that God holds the church responsible for the condition of this nation. He said the fate of the nation lies in the hands of the church. If the church does not rise up and exercise her dominion over the nation (by prayer and intercession) the nation

may soon perish. If it were not for the praying church, Satan would have already destroyed this nation like so many others. While this nation has slipped downward in its spiritual and moral life, the fact that it is still not destroyed is a testimony to the praying saints who are exercising their God given dominion.

I have often wondered why this relationship was not clearly spelled out in scripture because this knowledge is essential to the function of the church. I now think it is written down as clearly as possible and everything else comes by revelation. If the full relationship between Christ and the church could be freely written down it would no longer remain a mystery that had to be revealed. Since this is not just a mechanical relationship it cannot be explained or understood mechanically. If this relationship was what Paul saw in the third heaven he was not permitted to speak freely about it.

The creation of Eve out of Adam is an accurate picture for us of Christ and the church. Eve was organically connected to Adam even though she was a separate person with a free will. She was made from him. GEN 2:23] And the man said, **“This is now bone of my bones, And flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, Because she was taken out of Man.”** In that same way the church was taken “out of Christ” and is “organically” connected to Him. He is in her and she is in Him. There is the Last Adam and there is the last Eve, Christ and the church.

If this could be clearly understood, Ephesians 2 could be better understood and believed. This sounds so incredible if we see Christ as separate from the church. EPH 2:6] **and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus,** If this was by revelation rather than a Christian cliché, the church would manifest the authority of the throne which is the basis of spiritual warfare.

The Head is not complete and operable without the body and the body is without function without the Head. For function the two must become one. The legs need a head and a head need the legs. This can be mechanically understood but for spiritual understanding of the reality we must have revelation.

Since Christ has been highly exalted to the right hand of God and to the very throne of heaven His body can't be somewhere else, if they are “organically connected! If we have been raised up and seated with Him in the heavenly places, this places the church in the most unique position of the whole universe. If Christ has been given all power and all authority over all things as head of the church, the church must share and manifest that power, authority and dominion “in His name”. The church, by revelation, is living “within His name”. If this is true and recognized it places the church in the throne room of the universe and ascribes to the church the authority of the ages when the church functions under the direction of the Head. The church making up her own agendas and commanding her own blessings is nothing. The body without the head is just dead flesh and cannot please God.

One of the questions we need to have answered is this; If the church is so powerless and ineffective why has the devil not turned this whole earth into hell. As bad as the world system has become it is still not hell. The only answer that can be given is that some areas of the church must

be functioning and holding back the full force of hell. 2 THES 2:5 while I was still with you, I was telling you these things? [6] **And you know what restrains him now, so that in his time he may be revealed.** [7] For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; **only he who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way.** [8] And then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming;

The “one who restrains” can either be the Holy Spirit or the church or the Holy Spirit IN the church. This restraint is in force at this time but at the proper time the restraint will be taken out of the way and the full force of evil will be released. Something or someone is at work now and is effective in “holding back the full onslaught” of the evil one. Otherwise all of society would fall apart. God may have some hidden warriors! However, all this is not offensive but just defensive.

PSALM 149:5 Let the godly ones exult in glory; Let them sing for joy on their beds. [6] Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, ***And a two-edged sword in their hand,*** [7] To execute vengeance on the nations, And punishment on the peoples; [8] **To bind their kings with chains, And their nobles with fetters of iron; [9] To execute on them the judgment written;**

This is an honor for all His godly ones. Praise the LORD!

It seems that God’s plan is for the church to begin an offensive warfare in order to defeat the enemy around us and release many of his captives. LUKE 4:18] "THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME, BECAUSE HE ANOINTED ME TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO THE POOR. **HE HAS SENT ME TO PROCLAIM RELEASE TO THE CAPTIVES, AND RECOVERY OF SIGHT TO THE BLIND, TO SET FREE THOSE WHO ARE DOWNTRODDEN, [19] TO PROCLAIM THE FAVORABLE YEAR OF THE LORD."**

Another translation says: To tell the captives you can go free. Then it is the church’s responsibility to execute on the rulers of the earth the judgements that are already written. That means to enforce the victory of Calvary and obey the commandment to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. The church has the authority to bind the nobles with bands of iron. If the church in general understood that the church is fully connected (organically) to Christ and raised up with Him and seated with Him and that even now she is CO-SOVEREIGN with Him, she could shake the nations and cause the demons to tremble and throw the spiritual forces of darkness into confusion and panic.

The church’s sovereign position reminds me of a story of an owner of a large business who wanted to go away for a few weeks and left the employees in charge of the business. He gave them full authority to make the decisions for the business. After he was gone for a few days the employees declared a vacation for all with full pay. They used their authority to remain idle and bankrupted the company. This is the modern version of Jesus’ parable in Math 25:14-30.

The church has been given tremendous authority and equal responsibility but has used her authority to declare a holiday and remain idle but demand all the blessing of full employment.

REV 22:17 And **the Spirit and the bride say, "Come."** And let **the one who hears say, "Come."** And let **the one who is thirsty come;** let the one **who wishes** take the water of life without cost.

We may wonder why the Spirit doesn't just announce that all should come. However, He will not do any thing or "say" anything without her. This is a combined effort between the Spirit **AND** the bride. The Spirit makes known what is on His heart to the bride and inspires the bride to use her voice to say "Come". Then those who can hear are to repeat the commandment to "come". Then the one who is thirsty will respond "by coming". Then all those who wish may take of the water of life without cost. It all begins in the heart of the Spirit and is conveyed to the bride. The bride repeats the will of God on earth. The bride by herself on the street crying out "Come" will accomplish very little because this is a cooperative effort between God and man.

The union, the cooperation and the harmony between the Spirit and the bride is the foundation for all the effectiveness of prayer. The frustration we experience in prayer is experienced when the 'bride' begins to pray things that have nothing to do with what the Spirit is saying. Praying "crisis prayers" for ourselves is not incense. EXO 30:37] "And the incense which you shall make, **you shall not make in the same proportions for yourselves;** it shall be holy to you **for** the LORD. [38] "Whoever shall make any like it, **to use as perfume,** shall be cut off from his people." Many church prayer meetings are just personal perfume and are for our own benefit and have nothing to do with the heart of God or His purpose for the earth.

If one can chase a thousand and two can chase ten thousand, the corporate prayer meeting should be effective in chasing multitudes. The fact is that when we gather together to pray over everybody's crisis the demons are laughing and mocking. We pray over the symptoms and do no warfare against the source of the crises.

Those who are called to the ministry of prayer should begin by praying for God to wake the church leaders and members up to the real purpose of prayer. EPH 1:15 For this reason I too, having heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus which exists among you, and your love for all the saints, [16] do not cease giving thanks for you, while making **mention of you in my prayers;** [17] that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a **spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him.** [18] I **pray** that the **eyes of your heart may be enlightened,** so that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of **His inheritance in the saints,** [19] and what is the surpassing **greatness of His power toward us who believe.** These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might [20] which He brought about 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 every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in the one to come.

When Paul saw their faith and love being manifest he knew it was time to pray down the very next revelation on this "spiritual church". It was now that they needed the impartation of Spirit of

Wisdom and Revelation in the knowledge (epi-gnosis= exact, precise knowledge) of God. The next three things required that their spiritual eyes be opened so they could “see” these things by revelation. The last one was the tremendous power that God released and made available to the church at the resurrection and ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is an example of the Spirit and the bride saying !

One of the greatest tools that God has given to the church for evangelism, spiritual growth, and ministry perception is prayer. This prayer was offered for the benefit of the church that was definitely “saved” but not yet complete. While there is much prayer offered from time to time for the world and the unsaved there is far too little prayer offered for the functioning church that is stuck at one growth period and desperately needs another impartation from God. Paul indicated that he didn’t cease making these kind of prayers.

COL 1:7-----who is a faithful servant of Christ on our behalf, [8] and he also informed us **of your love in the Spirit.**

COL 1:9 For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, **we have not ceased to pray for you** and to ask that **you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, [10] so that you may walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; [11]** strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience; joyously [12] giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. [13] For He delivered us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, [14] in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

PHIL 1:9] And **this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment, [10] so that you may **approve the things that are excellent,** in order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ; [11] having been **filled with the fruit of righteousness** which comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.**

The word “sincere” in the Greek means “examined in the sunlight and found pure”. It implies to be examined in the strongest light without finding a defect. Blameless means “without offense” by neither offending God or another. Some translate this as “without cause for stumbling”. Some translate this phrase as “So when the day of Christ comes you may be found pure and without offense”. Filled with the “whole fruit”(filled to the full with fruit) of righteousness indicates the inner work of the Spirit producing the full fruit in disposition, character, attitudes and right actions.

It is not necessary to examine every word to understand that the focus of these prayers is for the saints to grow up to the full stature of Christ and be transformed to be prepared for the “day of Christ”. It is wholly God’s prerogative to judge the principles and character by which men live and function together with others.

In the light of these prayers, we may wonder why there is any need for these prayers in the first

place because it is certainly God's will for all the saints to grow up in all things into Christ. For "the church" to exercise her authority on the earth every aspect of the church's action and life must be compared to God's design (that was shown on the mountain and revealed in the New Jerusalem). If God only works in the affairs of men and earth after men pray and ask God to do it, even the church's growth must be included in the prayers of the saints. This puts an awesome responsibility upon the ministries of the church to pray for those who are within their charge and responsibility.

One of the significant things that is revealed in these prayers and exhortations is Paul's gratitude to God for all the grace, truth, faith, hope and love that was manifested in the saints. These are foundational for further growth and their "perfection". The mark of Paul's maturity was that he focused upon these positive attributes and gave God thanks for them rather than focus upon their faults and defects. To discern the inner work of the Holy Spirit within them was more important to Paul than to spy out their weaknesses and rebuke them. Paul was filled with gratitude when he heard of their love or grace because he must have realized that had to be the work of God and not just the result of some outward "ministry". He may have sensed that they lacked some direct knowledge of God (epi-gnosis) and spiritual wisdom so he prayed specifically to God for that need. Since this "revelation" can only come from God it would be fruitless to assign "a minister" to go there and finish that work. Confident prayer was the solution to the church's need.

For all those who have a burden to pray for the church it is essential that they also have spiritual discernment to know what is lacking of the divine nature and to pray specifically for that to be imparted. It is interesting that Paul is not rebuking the devil or criticizing the local ministers but is going right to the Source from whom the benefit flows. Rebuking the devil might work for a hour but spiritual knowledge of God and spiritual wisdom to use that knowledge would build them up to resist the devil so he would flee from them. Rebuking the devil is sometimes necessary but is a never ending chore if the saints don't grow up to maturity.

Acknowledging the wonderful things that God has already done and are visible or discernable is a faith builder when praying for the next impartation of God. The church, including the ministries, has ignorantly ignored prayer as the only solution for the impartation of God because they think God already knows what they need so why ask. After all it is God's will so He will do it whether we ask or not! The lack must be because the saints are lazy about their spiritual life and apathetic toward spiritual growth. No! They lack because the "ministers" are ignorant and lazy and apathetic toward spiritual growth.

The energetic and effective ministry of Paul, especially while he was in prison, was the ministry of prayer. When he was with them he could teach them many things but when he was absent he could pray that God would impart the spiritual life necessary to be ready for the day of Christ. Teaching without the impartation would be ineffective for the eternal preparation.

We may get so tired of immature Christians that take up all our time and energy but we are ignorant that God is holding us responsible to pray down the impartation from God that will solve their problem and therefore our problem. There is no greater ministry than prayer when prayer is responding to the heart of God.