

Chapter 46 - The Power of the Church

- I. Introduction.
 - A. Study today – Chapter 46 of Wayne Grudem – The Power of the Church.
 - (1). **Do you think the average person would look at the Christian church and say it has power?**
 - (2). **What causes a perception that the church has or lacks power?**
 - (3). **Is that perception more likely to be found in the West or everywhere?**
 - (4). **How is the state of the churches in Europe, is it alive or dead? [Bannister, Word & Power Church, page 21]**
 - B. Definition: The power of the church is its God-given authority to carry on spiritual warfare, proclaim the gospel, and exercise church discipline (Grudem, 887).
2. Spiritual Warfare.
 - A. Grudem's description.
 - (1). **What are the tools of spiritual warfare?** Prayer, worship, rebuking of demons, words of scripture, faith and church members walking in righteousness. [Page 888]
 - (2). **What examples do we see within scripture?**
 - b. The girl in Philippi who had a spirit to predict the future (**Acts 16:16-18**).
 - (3). Wayne Grudem (on Page 889) asks if the church has the same power of the apostles, and does emphasize there is authority to do church discipline. His final comment is that we are to be faithful in scripture and prayer and leave the rest in God's hands.
 - a. My perception: It is almost as if an army is told to clean their weapons, keep a supply of ammo and maybe they'll be ready for a war if it happens.
 - B. **Acts 10:38** (Peter is at Cornelius' house) how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him. **Did Jesus keep the power to himself?** No!
 - C. Jesus passed that power to the disciples. **Acts 1:8** But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. **But did they just have power?** No!
 - D. They needed the authority to use the power. **Matthew 10:7-8** As you go, preach this message: The kingdom of heaven is near. Heal the sick; raise the dead; cleanse those who have leprosy; drive out demons. **Was having the authority and power enough?** No!
 - E. They learned how to walk in authority and power from Jesus himself.
 - (1). The Word of God.
 - a. They learned about how the Word of God is attacked by the evil one. **Matthew 13:19** (the parable of the sower) When

anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is the seed sown along the path.

This is the importance of God's word in spiritual warfare.

- b. This is echoed in **1 John 2:14** I write to you young men, because you are strong, and the word of God lives in you, and you have overcome the evil one. We find strength to overcome the evil one with the word of God living in us.

(2). Healing the Sick or Those Under the Power of the Devil.

- a. **Luke 18:10-17** a woman had been crippled by a spirit for eighteen years. Jesus heals her and in dealing with the synagogue ruler, who protested the healing on the Sabbath, Jesus said this woman, a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan had kept bound for eighteen years, should be set free. **This is the importance of spiritual warfare and God's power to heal.**

- b. **Mark 5:25-34** a woman who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years. She had suffered a great deal under the care of many doctors and had spent all she had; yet instead of getting better, she grew worse. She touched Jesus. **God's power is compared to limitation of the doctors.**

(3). Driving Out Demons.

- a. **Mark 5:1-20** Jesus and the disciples cross over to the Gadarenes and are met by a man with an evil spirit who has been living in the tombs. How many demons were there? Jesus casts them out into the pigs. The man is sent to tell people how much Jesus had done for him. **God's power is seen in direct opposition to spiritual powers or demons.**
- b. **Mark 9:14-29** Jesus comes down from the mountain with Peter, James and John and there is a situation with his other disciples and a man who has asked the disciples to drive a spirit out of his son. They could not. Jesus rebukes the deaf and mute spirit and commands it to come out. Later the disciples ask why they could not drive it out. Jesus responds and tells them that this kind can only come out by prayer (and fasting). **God's power is tied into prayer and fasting.**

(4). **Are we supposed to walk in this power as the church?**

- (5). I just completed a report about Guinea-Bissau that speaks of animism. They have various amulets and things to protect from evil spirits. Both Muslims and Catholics have syncretic ties with animist beliefs. If your religion doesn't work use the other one. How do we prepare missionaries to walk in spiritual warfare without preparation?

- F. Jesus as the head of the church, we are the body. Does his power flow through the church?

- G. Jesus could not do many things (Mark 6:5, Luke 8:12).
 - H. These are the dangers of the Western church:
 - (1). Word of God is without experience. **James 2:17** Faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.
 - (2). **Where is God's power to heal? Was it only for the apostles?**
We read about Stephen in **Acts 6:8**, a man full of God's grace and power, who did great wonders and miraculous signs among the people. Doctors and health care still aid in the redemption of man's sin, but do we make it the default solution in the West?
 - (3). **Where did all the demons go from Jesus' time until now? Do we recognize possession and oppression from Satan? Do we turn these people over to the professions, for bi-polar disorders, schizophrenia, and other mental illnesses? Do we have to take more action like prayer and fasting?**
 - (4). Are we more satisfied to be like in **Mark 6:5** when Jesus goes to his hometown? People are amazed at his teaching, but Jesus could not do any miracles there except lay his hands on a few sick people and heal them. He was amazed at their lack of faith.
3. Proclaim the Gospel.
- A. **Romans 1:16** I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.
 - B. **1 Corinthians 1:17** For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel - not with words of human wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.
 - C. **Ephesians 3:7** I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God's grace given me through the working of his power. God's power is working in the church to make them servants of his gospel.
 - D. **1 Thessalonians 1:5** because our gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction.
 - E. Power of the church toward those opposing the gospel - Elymas/Bar-Jesus was a Jewish sorcerer and false prophet, trying to oppose the preaching of the gospel (**Acts 13:6-11**). Paul calls him a child of the devil.
4. Exercise Church Discipline - there was a lot more to this in the chapter. But if the church is walking in right relationship with God and each other, this should not happen often.
- A. What is the purpose?
 - (1). Restoration and reconciliation!
 - a. Sin affects relationships - person and God, person to others.
 - b. Restoration is for right behavior. Reconciliation is for the relationships.
 - c. **Romans 8:15-16** For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of

- sonship. And by him we cry, “Abba, Father.” The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children.
- d. **Proverbs 13:24** He who spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is careful to discipline him.
 - e. **Hebrews 12:5-11** And you have forgotten that word of encouragement that addresses you as sons: “My son, do not make light of the Lord’s discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son.”
Verse 8 If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons.
 - f. **How does God discipline at times?** He uses the church.
 - g. Examples.
 - [1]. Paul turns Hymenaeus and Alexander to Satan so that they might learn not to blaspheme (**1 Tim. 1:20**).
 - [2]. Paul directs the Corinthian church to have the man living in incest be delivered Satan so his spirit would be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus (**1 Cor. 5:1-5**).
 - This situation is successful and Paul tells the church in his second letter to forgive and comfort the individual so that he would not be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow (**2 Cor. 2:5-11**).
 - [3]. Ananias and Sapphira (**Acts 5:1-11**) - it brought great fear on the whole church and all who heard about it.
 - [4]. This is not completely new because God administered discipline through his people Israel in the Old Testament to deal with sin - ex. Achan’s sin is resolved through the people in **Joshua 7**. It affected the nation in being made liable for destruction (v. 12).
 - [5]. Sabbath breaker is put to death by the whole assembly (**Numbers 15:32-36**).
 - [5]. We see a more formal way of administering discipline: brother-to-brother, testimony of multiple to brother, church to brother (**Matt. 18:15-17**).
- (2). Keep sin from spreading to others.
- a. Situation in Corinthian church - they were proud and should have been filled with grief. **1 Cor. 5:6** says “Don’t you know a little yeast works through the whole batch of dough?”
 - b. Hebrews 12:15 see to it no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many. What is this? Do we see an example?
 - [1]. **Numbers 12** Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses.

- [2]. **Numbers 14** the people rebel and speak of stoning Moses and Aaron, Joshua and Caleb saying they should choose a leader to go back to Egypt.
 - [3]. **Numbers 16** there is Korah's rebellion.
 - [4]. They were not quick learners. **Numbers 16:41** After Korah and others are swallowed by the earthquake and 250 men who were consumed by fire while offering incense, the whole Israelite community grumbled against Moses and Aaron.
 - [5]. It is resolved by the budding of Aaron's staff in **Numbers 17:8**, the purpose "to put an end to their grumbling against God, so that they would not die."
- (3). Protect the purity of the church and the honor of Christ.
 - a. The church is responsible for discipline of Jesus will step in (**Rev. 2:14-15** and **Rev. 2:20-23**).
- B. What sins should the Church use discipline?
 - (1). News situation - should communion be allowed to political leaders who support abortion legislation?
 - C. How should church discipline be carried out?
 - (1). Knowledge of sin is to be kept at the smallest group as possible.
 - (2). Disciplinary measures should increase until there is a resolution.
 - (3). Jesus' presence and power are behind decisions made by the church (**Matt. 18:19-20**) where two or more are gathered, there I am in the midst of them.
 - D. What about discipline of the church leaders?
 - (1). 1 Timothy 5:19-21 There is to be evidence by two or more witnesses and if the sin persists, rebuke in the presence of all.
 - (2). We read of the example of Paul toward Peter with an open rebuke of Jewish legalism and the law (**Gal. 2:11-14**).
 - E. Miscellaneous aspects of church discipline.
 - (1). **How does church discipline get abused?** Lack of mercy, restoration, and reconciliation!
 - (2). Restore in a spirit of gentleness (Gal. 6:1).
- 5. Power of the Church and Power of the State.
 - A. The Church does not use physical force, not like the Crusades or back in medieval Europe or later Church of England.
 - B. We have abused the separation of church and state. It was not meant to stop from having a copy of the Ten Commandments from hanging in a courtroom, to stop having a cross displayed publicly or keeping a crèche from being built on a local town square.
- 5. Closing verse: **Psalm 71:17-18** Since my youth, O God, you have taught me and to this day I declare your marvelous deeds. Even when I am old and gray, do not forsake me, O God, till I declare your power to the next generation, your might to all who are to come.