

Authority in the Church

That there is authority in the church is indisputable. What form that authority is to take is another matter and it is on the nature of that authority that we find the scriptures speaking about frequently. As always, the best place to start establishing doctrine is with the words of Jesus who is our Chief Cornerstone. We will do well to let His teaching on the matter be the foundation of our understanding. Amen.

Matthew 20:25-28 NKJV

But Jesus called them to *Himself* and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. 26 Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. 27 And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave— 28 just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”

Matthew 23:8-12 NKJV

But you, do not be called ‘Rabbi’; for One is your Teacher, the Christ, and you are all brethren. 9 Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven. 10 And do not be called teachers; for One is your Teacher, the Christ. 11 But he who is greatest among you shall be your servant. 12 And whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.

If Jesus was speaking in our present time, I am sure He would make mention of the contemporary titles that men are now called and the titles they allow themselves to be called, like Reverent, Vicar, Pope, Pastor, Minister etc. And as for authority among the people of God? It’s something the Gentiles do but, “It shall not be so among you.”

1 Peter 5:1-4

The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: 2 Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; 3 nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; 4 and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.

The key phrases in Peter’s instruction are: ‘nor as being lords’; and ‘being examples to the flock’. When we look at the authority structures of our modern day churches, it’s hard to see a form of leadership that aligns with the above scriptures. From where did we get the clergy laity system found in the vast majority of our contemporary churches with its highly structured hierarchical authoritarianism?

A major factor in this departure from the leadership model portrayed by both Jesus and Peter is found to be the fault of the early English translators of the Bible. Being steeped as they were in the traditions of man long established by the Catholic Church and untouched by the Reformation, they approached the scriptures with their institutional glasses on, the

intents of their hearts swaying them to preserve both their positions and their power. Although they found it difficult to alter the meaning of the words in the scriptures just quoted above, when we look at the writings of Paul we find that they found great opportunity take extraordinary liberties in their renderings of the original Greek. In so doing they could then focus on these verses and ignore those that did not suit their purpose whereby they could maintain their position and power. What follows are the verses that they chose to amend.

Hebrews 13:7 NKJV

Remember those who rule over you, who have spoken the word of God to you, whose faith follow, considering the outcome of *their* conduct.

Hebrews 13:17 NKJV

Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.

Hebrews 13:24 NKJV

Greet all those who rule over you, and all the saints.

1 Thessalonians 5:12 NKJV

And we urge you, brethren, to recognize those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you

All over the world, the words 'rule over you' from Hebrews and 'over you' from Thessalonians in the above four verses are used to support the authoritarian status quo and very few have bothered to question the obvious contradiction that these words have to those recorded as having come from the Master.

With but a little investigation I discovered astoundingly, that the word 'over' has **no corresponding original** in the Greek text! Check it out in Strongs or any other interlinear reference. There is just one word supplied in the Greek and that is *hymon or humon*, (depending on the pronunciation into Greek) used 565 times in the New Testament and translates as 'you' or 'your' depending on the context. There is just no justification for adding the word 'over'. Yet translators and editors, sometimes even in their interlinear references, continue with this terrible perversion of God's Word to this present day.

The NKJV breaks their own editorial rules which they include in the preface of their Bible version which states that words added for clarification are in italics. But they fail to abide by their own guidelines with these particular verses. Other Bible versions are just as guilty of following the traditional protection of the clergy class authoritarianism. Woe to those who have added to His Word.

Combined with this addition of the word 'over' to the text, we also find that liberties have been taken with the word rendered 'rule'. At least with this word, some Bible versions

have ventured to place the literal and more accurate word 'lead' into their centre column reference. To lead is a lot different than to rule. One is serving by example and the other is ruling by precept.

The phrase "who rule over you" ought to be rendered "who lead you". The North American Standard Bible translates verse 13:7 in the past tense as follows:

Hebrews 13:7 NASB

Remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you; and considering the result of their conduct, imitate their faith.

But they change their tune in verse 13:17 to "your leaders" and join the many other translations of these verses that use the phrase "your leaders" which is not entirely accurate either as it changes the verb into a noun, thereby making a title instead of a function.

Jesus made the distinction about this kind of leadership with his rebuke of the Pharisees. He warned His disciples to do what they say BUT not what they do. He knew that people were prone to being trained by what they see someone doing and so He gave the warning.

As the saying goes, "If you keep on doing what you've always done, you'll keep on getting what you've always got." We must realise that the example that we are subject to is more powerful than the words we hear. The example of domination of the proceedings that goes on week after week, where the obedient are relegated to pews whilst a preacher does their pulpitering, can only continue to produce a passive caricature of Christianity devoid of the power and purity portrayed by the scriptures; a form of Godliness which we are exhorted to avoid.

The distortion of the scriptures that has been discovered in the above verses is something that any believer can validate with today's access to the internet. We can now in a few moments, have access to Biblical Greek Dictionaries, Concordances and the like and check things out for ourselves, for the Word says to us that we should, "Test all things."

Truly, the whole meaning was changed to allow for a continuation of a clergy laity system that has its roots in Babylon; was continued by the apostate Catholic Church with all of its abuses through the dark ages; and was not done away with during the Reformation which brought forth the Protestant Movement which carried on with much of the same political power administered by the Papacy.

But now, when we add the command to submit to elders, we find that a completely different relationship is evoked that is consistent with the commands of Jesus. We can willingly submit to leadership whose example of loving service and faith we can follow. And we are free to ignore people who may seem to have position, but when we discern their lack of fruit we can avoid them like the plague.

The relationship of one who leads and the one who is being led has been likened to a man who has a guide to assist him on his mountain climbing expedition. Because the guide

knows the way, the one being led follows his instructions. But at any time, the one being led can dismiss his guide if he proves to be unreliable by stumbling and falling. He is under no obligation to follow a wayward guide over the cliff.

Here is a comment from a renowned Bible Commentator who also saw this problem:

Raymond C Stedman

The English translators of the Scriptures were in a church that had a highly structured hierarchical leadership. Thus, many Scriptural references are translated in that direction. The phrase, "those who . . . are over you in the Lord," is not a good translation. It reflects a relationship that Scripture everywhere speaks against. Jesus said to his disciples, "do not be called Rabbi; for One is your Teacher, and you are all brothers." {Mt 23:8}. Christians are brothers. That is not practiced in very many places, unfortunately. What is really being said here in Thessalonica is, "respect those who labor among you and stand before you in the Lord." The apostle is referring to those who stand in front and lead the whole group. There is no suggestion of anyone being "over" others. Tradition has caused this proper translation to be lost sight of down through the years. It badly needs correction.

As children of God we are brought into a relationship with our Father God by the indwelling Holy Spirit. The ultimate goal of our instruction is that we become mature in our walk so that we are led by the Holy Spirit at all times. This will produce in us a walk that is distinguished by a beautiful combination of love and power that no longer depends or trusts in man, but totally trusts and depends upon God.

If we become mature sons and daughters of God, we will find ourselves with the wisdom of God to both instruct and demonstrate what it takes to walk with God. We will become elders and will be able to speak with authority on what it takes to walk with God, or we will become silly old fools who could not be trained. The choice is yours.

Authority in the Church? Here is the authority Jesus gave:

Luke 10:19 NKJV

Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you.

Matthew 28:18-20 NKJV

And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, *even* to the end of the age." Amen.

Mark 16:15-18 NKJV

And He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. 16 He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned. 17 And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; 18 they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.”

We have been given authority from on High to go and make disciples, baptize them and teach them everything He has commanded us. Let us exercise that authority over our enemy so that we may grow into all that He has for us. And don't let some uppity so called pastor try and tell you that you need to be under authority. We are already under authority to Jesus and He has said we are NOT to be like the authorities of this world. Amen.