



## Chapter 2 Reflected Authority is the Key

Where does the leader's authority come from? His position, his gifting, his anointing, his experience, his charisma, his age, his years of theological training, his physical stature, his knowledge of the original languages, or his voice intonation? Jesus makes it very clear that none of these areas are the source of the leader's authority. Yet, when we observe the attitude of many who are involved in leadership, it seems that perhaps they haven't really come to grips with where their authority is derived and what that means to their use of their authority.

The first word that we need to explore is the principal New Testament Greek word for Power or Authority - **Exousia**. It is similar to the word *katexousiados*, which is also translated as Power, but Exousia is missing the "*kata*" preposition. The absence of the "*kata*" removes the "*against*" element. It is authority, but it isn't authority in opposition to or against someone else.

### Jesus Exemplified Reflected Authority

Foerster, comments on this word, "*It is the right to do something or the right over something.*" It carries with it the sense of **reflected authority**. The right or freedom to accomplish a certain thing because of the power of God behind the one attempting to accomplish that act. In this sense Jesus' authority on earth was reflected authority. Jesus Himself even says so in John 5:

John 5:19 (NKJV) Then Jesus answered and said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, **the Son can do nothing of Himself**, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner. 26 "For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself, 27 "and has given Him **authority** to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man. 30 "I can of Myself do nothing. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is righteous, because I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me.

It is the power to Decide, and as such reflects the invisible power of God, whose Word is a creative power. It manifests itself in the authority of the State whose power is a reflection of God's divine power on earth amongst men, to create order and harmony. The word of the leader is to reflect the Word of God and is therefore to be obeyed, not as the leader's independent authority, represented in a title, office, or position, but as it reflects the Word of God. We see Paul declare this relationship in Roman 13:

Rom 13:1 (NKJV) Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. 2 Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves.

In this Romans 13 context, the authority being referred to is the authority of a governmental representative of the state. It is not a reference to pastoral authority in the Church. However, the principle of derived or reflective authority is evident, in that even though the state leader is not himself subject to God, as a believer, nevertheless, his governing authority exists because God has permitted humans to rule in the affairs of state among men, on His behalf. Indirectly, his authority to govern is from God.

When it comes to the Church, the same principle is active, though it operates in very different ways. As a submitted believer, to the ultimate lordship of Christ, the pastoral leader, different than the state leader, is required to seek revelation and biblical support for every command he brings to the body, and is not allowed to rule in the midst of the body, with his own personal agenda, as though that agenda were automatically God's agenda.

Let me pause for a moment, and amplify this meaning. My job as a leader is not to move people towards my personal goals for their lives, but rather, to accurately communicate God's goals for their lives, and allow the authority of His Word to affect their thinking and lives.

## **The Disciples Exemplified Reflected Authority**

When Jesus commissions His disciples in Matthew 28:18, He takes His reflected authority and reflects it into them to be an expression of His authority in the earth. It was not their authority, but rather His, and was to be used with serious regard to its origin.

Mat 28:18 (NKJV) And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth."

When, in Acts 8, Simon wishes to obtain the power or authority that is working in Peter, Simon expresses his desire for such authority in verse 19 "that anyone on whom I lay hands may receive the Holy Spirit", Peter reacted violently because he recognized the carnal desire of man to operate in the authority of Christ without being duly submitted to Him first. He resisted all manipulative use of the authority of Christ to accomplish Simon's own independent will.

We cannot over emphasize this point. If there is any one failure of Church leadership, that shows up over and over again, it is right at this point. When once a man is given a divine calling as a leader, at that very moment he must guard against this tendency of the flesh to promote and force his independent will upon the Church he serves, as if it were the Word of the Lord.

Simon saw this potential authority as an opportunity for his flesh to develop strong security and significance among men. He longed to be respected, and given the right to control people for his own selfish ends. No one, who takes up the mantle of leadership, dare fail to learn this lesson from Simon.

## **Our Authority is Reflected**

Jesus, in Mark 13:34, makes it very clear in His parable, that the authority we have is authority He has given us, and as such our use of it is always to reflect His will, His manner, and His direction. Since we already know that He never used it to manipulate or coerce people for selfish purposes, then we see once again the awesome responsibility to handle this reflected authority properly.

Mark 13:34 (NKJV) "It is like a man going to a far country, who left his house and gave authority to his servants, and to each his work, and commanded the doorkeeper to watch.

Leaders are given Jesus' authority, but it is only safe when it is submitted to Christ. Whenever this authority expresses itself outside the parameters of His direct leading it becomes hurtful.

When you connect the concepts of the authority or power in a declared Word, with the sense of reflected authority, you begin to see the danger that there is in an independent usage of power, apart from direct divine leading. People are brought into the bondage of false teaching by submission to

their leadership's authority, and are then unable to become free from such teaching when new and more accurate teaching comes along. When people place themselves under the authority of leaders, who are using their authority in a way that is less than fully submitted to the will of God, they teach people the commandments of men and make it very difficult for the people to come out from under that authority and accept or trust accurate doctrine that reflects the true Word of God's authority.

## **Only Obey Reflected Authority**

We therefore note a very delicate balance that is necessary. On one hand all believers are to “submit” to the authority of their leadership, but only to “obey” them as their authority reflects Christ's, and not the leadership's own separate authority. Thus Peter has a spirit of submission in Acts 5:29, but it is first and foremost in submission to the authority of Christ, and his “obedience” is tempered by his awareness of God’s will.

Acts 5:29 (NKJV) But Peter and the other apostles answered and said: “We ought to obey God rather than men.

While “submission” is essential, in those called to follow the leaders God has placed in their lives, “obedience” is another matter entirely. The disciples were always submissive in their hearts, but frequently disobedient, when obedience to man would have required them to disobey God.

The very moment Church is turned into a business, and the pastor made a CEO, it is inevitable that his leadership will no longer be of an entirely spiritual nature, but will take on natural elements germane to the tasks of leading his staff. He will not find it possible to keep separate, his business oriented leadership and his spiritual leadership. He will tell himself it is all about Christ, and therefore under his domain. He will believe His calling is to control the body’s spiritual life like he does the employees he hires. Such mixture will always usurp Jesus’ authority, and wound the Church.

All good leaders are always concerned that their followers first and foremost submit to and obey Jesus, and give them plenty of room to do so, without using their role as a means to pressure people towards their will.

And Paul, in Galatians 2:1-10, while being willing to submit his teaching to the scrutiny of the leadership in Jerusalem, was unwilling to do so to the degree that had they disagreed with the revelation he had received of Christ he would not have yielded to them and stopped teaching it. He would have submitted to their censorship of him, and the resulting stigma it might have placed on him, but he would not yield the truth he had received.

In some cases, leaders must communicate what they believe to be the will of God for the people they lead, and if the people question it being the mind of Christ, then all that remains to him is to pray and turn the matter over to Jesus. Intimidation, legalism, fear tactics, coercion, etc., are not acceptable tools in his ministry tool box.

Obviously the danger of becoming a “*lone ranger*” exists with this perspective of leadership authority, but it is a potential the Lord clearly prefers, over communicating a concept of authority that creates in the minds of men an “*absolute authority*” mentality. God’s exercise of authority amongst His anointed leaders is a precarious one because it acknowledges the possibility that followers will believe their leaders have not accurately heard from God or interpreted His Word accurately and will choose to make decisions of conscience and study that oppose their leaders. It is not that there won’t be repercussions of such decisions, but to be unwilling to accept such decisions, from one’s flock, is to encourage an abuse of authority that is far more dangerous.

However leadership is to function in the local Church, it must never be overbearing to the point where the people are intimidated into obeying the teaching and commands of the leadership when their own spirits tell them that the will of God is otherwise. Now certainly this can create precarious situations, where immature saints believe God has told them one thing while the leadership believe another, but the leadership are not allowed to step over the line of gentle exhortation and teaching, into the sphere of intimidation and coercion.

2 Tim 2:24 (NKJV) And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, 25 in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, 26 and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will.

It needs to be said here, lest I be misunderstood, that I am not suggesting anarchy in the local fellowship. If a follower comes to a point where he believes the direction of his leadership is sufficiently incorrect, and he has been unable to change their thinking, rather than openly oppose the leadership, within the context of the local expression of the Church itself, he is wisest to leave that fellowship and identify with another less abusive form of leadership in another local setting, or to shelve his concern for a season and give God time to resolve it in His own way. The possibility of having to separate from that leadership, and thus a given local fellowship, exists, and is understood as a deterrent to emotional decisions or outright rebellion. To lose the relationships developed within that local gathering will provide a good deterrent to quick and rebellious decisions to leave. When people have developed deep and enduring relationships, in the context of their local expression of the Church, they are not likely to walk away from those just because they are being asked to adhere to a biased opinion of a controversial passage of Scripture, or a pastoral agenda. But if that opinion turns out to be of a great enough concern, rather than remain and be seriously compromised, their leaving becomes necessitated at great personal cost.

## **Allow the Flock to make Mistakes**

People must be allowed, by the Grace of God, to experience the error of their own thinking, when they oppose true doctrine. To force, by intimidation, the flock to rigidly obey all teaching from the leadership, ultimately encourages them to disconnect from a direct relationship and responsibility to Christ, and become blind followers. This is certainly delicate, but it is critical. People must be allowed to make mistakes. People must be loved and encouraged, who believe they are to do something that the leadership oppose. Obviously there are limitations to this, as regards the impact of people's decisions upon the body as a whole. It would not be congruent with grace for leadership to stand back passively while someone teaches the Church false doctrine just because the leaders didn't want to over control them. It may become necessary for them to expose the error of those teaching falsely, so as to help the Church walk in truth. Yet on the other hand, when members of the body believe things in opposition to the leadership, and do so for the most part privately, in the final analysis all the leadership can do is defer to them and allow them to walk out their beliefs, yet still loving and blessing them.

Certainly there is a place for excommunication, as seen in 1 Cor.5, but those times are to be handled with such brokenness and humility, and hopefully on such rare occasions of extreme and unrepentant sin, that for the most part leadership are not involved in that role. And, even when they are they do not act unilaterally, without the support and agreement of the rest of the Church. Church discipline is never a matter for the leadership to handle alone. Church discipline is just that - "Entire Church" discipline. The entire Church involves itself in the disciplinary process, not just the leaders.

We will come back to the Moses principle of leadership later, but suffice it to say here, God was not pleased that the nation of Israel refused to come to the top of Mt. Sinai, and report as His nation

of priests. When they told Moses he could hear from God and tell them what to do, it was not pleasing to Yahovah. It wasn't then, and it wasn't later, when they chose a king to rule them, instead of being led through the prophetic voice of God, and it certainly isn't now that we have His Holy Spirit of revelation living within us, provided by His own death on the cross. Imagine how it must seem to Him, Who paid such a price to have the direct oversight of His people, to have leaders who, rather than represent Him, usurp His direct authority and lead His people astray. Under new covenant principle, leaders are only allowed to lead as they accurately reflect the wisdom, grace, and anointing of the Lord Jesus. In this sense God's people never lose their direct connectedness to God. Jesus exemplified this continually, when He ministered among the people, and the Pharisees wanted to know by what authority He said and did the things He did. He simply let them know He did what He did because He was submitted to God.

Matthew 21:23(NIV) Jesus entered the temple courts, and, while he was teaching, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to him. "By what authority are you doing these things?" they asked. "And who gave you this authority?"<sup>24</sup> Jesus replied, "I will also ask you one question. If you answer me, I will tell you by what authority I am doing these things. <sup>25</sup> John's baptism —where did it come from? Was it from heaven, or from men?" They discussed it among themselves and said, "If we say, "From heaven," he will ask, "Then why didn't you believe him?" <sup>26</sup> But if we say, "From men" we are afraid of the people, for they all hold that John was a prophet."<sup>27</sup> So they answered Jesus, "We don't know." Then he said, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things.

## Power to Edify, not Control & Destroy

We see Paul's gentle use of his power, and his awareness of the danger of abuse in this area. In 1 Cor.9:12 & 18, he could have tried to coerce them into paying him a salary, but he chose not to, so as to in no way be accused of misusing his authority. Paul had such a gentle approach to his authority.

1 Cor 9:12 (NKJV) If others are partakers of this right over you, are we not even more? Nevertheless we have not used this right, but endure all things lest we hinder the gospel of Christ.

1 Cor 9:18 (NKJV) What is my reward then? That when I preach the gospel, I may present the gospel of Christ **without charge**, that I may not abuse my authority in the gospel.

In 2 Cor.10:8, Paul makes it clear that his concept of his authority is that it is to be used for edification, not destruction. He recognized that abuse of authority existed in his day, and he had seen the devastating results of such authority. He wasn't about to perpetuate the errors he had observed.

2 Cor 10:8 (NKJV) For even if I should boast somewhat more about our **authority**, which the Lord gave us **for edification and not for your destruction**, I shall not be ashamed;

He realizes that if he wields his authority too imperiously, with this Corinthian Church, that he is going to hurt them. They simply can't take too strong of a leadership approach. He is willing to use extreme gentleness, even though he is so deeply concerned that how they are handling themselves is greatly endangering them. When you realize how seriously messed up this Church was, and then see the beautiful spirit of gentleness that Paul exhibits, it is clear that he knew how to handle authority like Christ. Leaders must be patient. If they let their agendas and their concerns override their sensitivity to the body's ability to respond to their leadership they will end up losing far more than if they had just been willing to love their flock and wait for the Lord to change the people. He quotes what appears to be his pet leadership authority phrase again in 2 Cor.13:10

**"FOR EDIFICATION AND NOT FOR DESTRUCTION"**

"Therefore I write these things being absent, lest being present I should use sharpness, according to the **authority** which the Lord has given me **for edification and not for destruction.**"

Misuse of authority doesn't just hurt some people, it destroys them. What a thought! Over the years I have observed countless Church members who have experienced heavy handed authority from their Church leaders and have become disillusioned enough that in some cases it has been years before they were willing to return to a gathering of the Church. In other cases it has just left them with a deep distrust for any form of Church leadership, and as such exposed them to the danger of self will with its tendency to deception and fruitlessness.

Think of it this way, leadership, whether they realize it or not, represent God to the people. When they misuse their authority, in any way, the fallout can be that the people project that on to God, and take up an offense with Him. So that while Jesus would never have handled His authority that way, and certainly didn't lead the leader to act in such a manner, nevertheless, the followers feel as if He did, and they find themselves angry with God. It is so often, right at this point, the enemy of their souls will seize their frustration and use it to draw them into one sin or another.

We cannot over emphasize how important these matters are. Hurtful leadership “destroys” God’s people!

## Grace Oriented Leadership

Finally, in 2 Thess.3:7-9:

2 Thess.3:7 (NKJV) For you yourselves know how you ought to follow us, for we were not disorderly among you; 8 nor did we eat anyone's bread free of charge, but worked with labor and toil night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, 9 not because we do not have authority, but to make ourselves an *example* of how you should follow us.

Paul was a grace man! He understood the implication of being a hand chosen apostle of the Lord. Now think about that for a minute. What an incredible temptation it must have been for Paul to know that Jesus Christ personally came to him and selected him to become a Scripture writing, Church establishing Apostle. Most of us who have hands laid upon us, to become leaders in just one local setting, wrestle with thinking that we have the right to tell our people what they should and shouldn't do at every turn of their lives. Yet Paul, carefully backed off of his authority so as to protect the fragile hearts of those who followed his leadership.

Paul's awareness of having Reflected Authority seemed to keep him in line. He knew it wasn't his own so he always went to the Head for instructions on just how strong to be. And because Jesus is so gentle and gracious he was led time and again to back off when what he obviously wanted to do was lower the boom. May God help us to see, with the eye of our spirit, what reflected leadership authority really looks like.