

The Lord Jesus Christ and Authority

by Frank Viola

Frank Viola's sermon emphasizes the liberating authority of Jesus Christ and the call for church leaders to serve rather than dominate.

Scripture: Matthew 20:25, Matthew 28:18, Ephesians 5:21, 1 Peter 5:1

Topics: "Servant Leadership", "Church Authority"

Description

Frank Viola delivers a powerful sermon on hierarchical leadership structures, contrasting the Roman model of top-down authority with Jesus Christ's teachings on servant leadership and liberation. Viola emphasizes that Jesus condemned the dominating and controlling nature of hierarchical leadership, advocating instead for setting people free and serving others. He highlights how Peter, in his letter to the churches, warns against elders lording over the flock and emphasizes the importance of humility, mutual submission, and being examples to the congregation.

Transcript

Jesus Christ came into the earth at a time when the Romans were in power. Now the Romans had a certain kind of leadership that marked their society. They got this leadership model from the Babylonians and the Egyptians. But the Romans brought it to perfection. It was the hierarchical leadership structure. In my country, our military is patterned after this structure. The Romans were great warriors, so it worked well for them.

Do you understand hierarchy? You have someone at the top, then you have someone under them, then you have someone at the very bottom. The one at the top has more authority than the one below him. The person lower has less authority than the one above, and on it goes. It is a descending order of authority. It's top-down authority. It is a command-style relationship.

The Romans perfected this structure. It was part of their culture. With that in mind, listen to the words of Jesus Christ. Matthew 20:25: "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them and their great men exercise authority over them."

The Greek word for "authority" is exousia. Brothers, you can read the New Testament from beginning to end and you will never find this word exousia (authority) in a context where one believer in Christ has exousia (authority) over another believer! You will never find that in the New Testament. It is not there.

Let's go on. Jesus said, "The rulers of the Gentiles [the Romans] lord it over those who are under them, exercising authority over them." The Greek word for "exercise authority" is *katexousiazō*. *Kata* means above or over. *Exousiazō* means to exercise authority over another. So *kataexousiazō* means top-down authority. It refers to hierarchical leadership. And Jesus is condemning it! Jesus also uses the phrase "lord it over them" to describe this form of leadership. The Greek word for "lord it over" is *katakuriēuo*. Keep this in mind.

According to Jesus, the Gentiles exercise authority from the top-down. They are lording it over the people. They are dominating the people. They are controlling the people. This always happens with hierarchical structures of descending authority. It creates a culture of control and oppression.

But our Lord says, "It shall not be so among you!" Jesus Christ, when He came into this earth, was the most liberated Person to walk the planet. His main job was to set people free. He is the Great Liberator. In His day, He set women free. The women followed Him wherever He was. And when He died on the cross, it was the women who were there, staying with Him. When He rose again from the dead, it was the women who came to Him first. Jesus Christ had a very exalted view of His followers. He had a very exalted view of women in a day when they were oppressed and suppressed. He was a liberator. This is very important, brothers. There is something in your Lord that is liberating, that comes to set people free.

Jesus says, "Whoever wishes to be great among you of my disciples, he shall be your servant." I'm going to make a very important statement at this point that we will come back to. The mark of a servant of God is that he comes to set people free. Not to lord over them. Not to control them. But to set them free. One of the major things that I do in planting a church is to set people free. And that is the ministry of Jesus Christ.

Now let us go to Matthew 28.

Jesus Christ is getting ready to ascend. These are some of His last words. You are familiar with them. Matthew 28:18: "All authority is given to me in heaven and on earth. All authority is mine."

Now, brothers, there is no authority except the authority of Jesus Christ! Only He has authority. There is no authority except His authority. This is important.

...

With the help of Silas, who was with Peter in Rome, Peter writes a letter to the Christians in Asia Minor and Galatia. It's called 1 Peter. Let's look at it. Peter opens with, "I am Peter. I am an apostle of Jesus Christ. I am writing to you who have been scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia" because of persecution.

Notice: Peter doesn't write to the elders. Like Paul, Peter writes to the churches. And everything he says is to the churches, until he gets to the last chapter. Do you understand the significance of that? The entire letter is to the churches. Only at the very end of the letter does he say a few words to the elders.

Brothers, hear this with the ears of your spirit. Peter knows that the churches are having a hard time. They are suffering. There is a tendency in men, in our human nature, to control God's people when things are going wrong among them. In our effort to protect them, there is a tendency to control them. Peter knew this. And this explains what he has to say to the elders.

1 Peter 5:1 says, "Therefore, I, Peter, speak to the elders who are among you." Notice his words: "Among you" . . . not over you. The elders are among the church, not over the church!

He goes on, "I am an elder--an old, faithful man. You also are elders--old, faithful men." Verse 2 says, "Shepherd [that means take care of] the flock of God." Let me tell you what the Greek says, "Shepherd the flock that is among you." Not under you. Do you understand? The church is among the elders, not under them!

He continues: "Exercise the oversight." He doesn't say "exercise the overlording." He says "exercise the oversight." He is telling them, "Look out for the saints. Care for them; they're hurting. You are older brothers, you know better. I am exhorting you to look after your younger brothers and sisters." That's what Peter is saying. He goes on, "Do not care for the church under compulsion." In other words, "because you have to." "Do not do it for dishonest gain. Do not take from them."

Then we have verse 3: "Not as being lords over those entrusted to you, but by being examples to the flock." Peter says to these elders, "Do not lord over the flock, but be examples to them." He then says to the younger brothers and sisters, "You younger brethren, submit your heart, listen to, and give weight to what the elders say to you. Not because they have authority over you. Not because they have the right to control you. But because they are older in spiritual life."

But as he closes in verse 5, Peter tells them all: "Be subject to one another in humility." These are echoes of Paul's words in Ephesians 5:21, "Submitting yourselves one to another . . ."

Now, brothers, listen to me. This is important. Peter is afraid that in this time of crisis the elders will start to lord over, control, take over, and exercise authority (exousia) over the church. So he says to them, "Do not lord over the flock." These words "lord over" are translated from the same Greek word that Jesus Christ used in the opening passage that I read when he said, "The Gentiles lord it over (katakuriueo) those under them. The Gentiles have a hierarchy. But it is not so among you." Peter repeats the Lord's words: "Do not lord over God's flock!" . . . "Do not be overlords over God's people!"

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/frank-viola/the-lord-jesus-christ-and-authority/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net