

DOMINION OVER THEM

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Words are important. They are important for truth and for understanding. Sinful men are not straightforward with words, however. They use words to lie, to deceive, and to manipulate. Civil authorities are among the worst offenders, they sometimes lie, and they sometimes mislead with euphemisms. They call civilian casualties of war as *collateral damage*; they call torture *enhanced interrogation*. Their greatest euphemism may be *civil servant*, or *minister*. Civil authorities are often not servants at all, but tyrants.

In Jesus time, the Jewish people expected that the Christ would one day come and establish His kingdom, as God promised He would. However, they did not understand the nature of His kingdom. They conceived of it as a civil government, like all other earthly kingdoms. Even Jesus's disciples had difficulty understanding what His kingdom is like. In civil governments, people are ruled by men, and those men rule by force. They make laws to govern people's lives, and with threat of violence they compel people to comply. In civil government, usually the rulers are considered the greatest, and the governed the least. Christ's kingdom is different. In fact, in His kingdom, it is the reverse. In His kingdom, not the one who rules, but the one who serves it the greatest. In Christ's kingdom, the greatest is the one that sacrifices himself for others, just as Christ did.

Jesus three times told his disciples that He would die, and rise again, and yet they could not understand it. In the summer before His crucifixion, He told them for the first time He told them, and Saint Peter rebuked Him, and said to Him, "Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee." (Matthew 16:22) Saint Luke writes that, when He sometime later told them a second time, "they understood not this saying." (Luke 9:45) He told them the third time the following winter, and again, Saint Luke writes, "they understood none of these things." (Luke 18:34) Then the mother James and John, the sons of Zebedee, said to Jesus, "Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left, in thy kingdom." (Matthew 20:21) According to Saint Mark, they asked Him the same. They believed that Christ is king, and would establish His kingdom on earth, and they desired to sit on either side of His throne in places of honor and authority. They did not, however, understand the nature of His kingdom. They believed His kingdom would be one of honor and glory for Jesus, and for His disciples, after He conquered the world. They were partly right. His kingdom is one of honor and glory for Him and His disciples since He has conquered the world; however, he conquered the world, not through force, but through self-sacrifice; not by subjugation, but by service.

When the other then disciples heard what Saint James and Saint John had asked, they were indignant against them. So, Jesus called them together, and said to them:

Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many. (Matthew 20:25-28)

The Son of God did not come into the world to dominate men, to subjugate them as other rulers do. He did not come into the world to have people serve Him; rather He came into the world to serve people, even to give His

life for them. The nature of His kingdom is not power and glory and dominance; it is rather meekness and humility and service.

People get angry without cause because they do not trust God. They use force without cause because they do not trust God. People that trust God leave matters to the wrath of God and they remember that He said, "To me belongeth vengeance, and recompence." (Deuteronomy 32:25; Romans 12:19) Saint James wrote:

From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members? Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not. Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts. (James 4:1-3)

Either they do not believe in the wisdom of God, or they do not believe in the power of God, or they believe in neither. Petty tyrants believe they are wiser than God, and more powerful than God. They believe they know better than God does, and that they are better able to make things right than God is. There is occasion for righteous anger, but sometimes a Christian will become angry, not because he is indignant but because he is frustrated; not because someone has opposed God's will, but rather because someone has opposed his own.

Saint Peter writes that Christ has given the Christian an example to follow, Christ, "Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously." (1 Peter 2:22, 23) Domination is the way of the pagan; submission the way of the Christian; Domination is a special temptation for leaders in the Church, so Saint Peter exhorts elders not to lord it over the people, but to be an example to them. (1 Peter 5:3). Saint Peter exhorts all Christians humbly to serve one another. He writes, "Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble." (1 Peter 5:5)

Let us not seek to dominate each other, but to serve each other. If we are treated unjustly, let us seek justice. Let us never repay evil for evil, but rather let us entrust ourselves to God who is just.

Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever. Amen.