



**How To Use Your Power
and Authority in
The New Year**

By

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It's a New Year!

That means new opportunities for serving God in new ways. There's an old saying that you will find out what a person is made of when you give them **power**. That's because power has the potential of corrupting people. Each of us has some power in life – some of us more than others. How did we use that power last year? Was it for the good of others? Was it pleasing to God? Did you use your power to “better” people or help people be better? Whatever your answer, the new year gives us new opportunities to use the power we have to bless people and improve their lives. Let's look at one example from the life of the Apostle Paul.

“Therefore, though I might be very bold in Christ to command you what is fitting, yet for love's sake I rather appeal to you—being such a one as Paul, the aged, and now also a prisoner of Jesus Christ.” Philemon 1:8-9

Paul had tremendous power and authority in the Church. He was the lead Apostle of the Gospel of the Grace of God. But Paul was also humble and wise. He knew from where the power came and why he had it. We learn a very important lesson about the use of power in this short letter to Philemon.

Paul was in prison for the Christian faith. Onesimus, a runaway slave, received Christ through Paul's prison ministry. Onesimus became a big help to Paul. Paul would have loved for Onesimus to stay with him longer but believed it was right to send Onesimus back to Philemon.

The reason was that Onesimus was one of Philemon's slaves. Paul did not approve of slavery but it was a part of the Greek culture and a reality with which Paul had to deal.

Paul could have easily swelled with pride and **commanded** Philemon to free Onesimus from slavery instantly. Paul could have chewed out Philemon about what an awful thing slavery was to do to another human being. Paul could have demanded that Philemon welcome back Onesimus, forgive him and give Onesimus his freedom. ***"... though I might be very bold in Christ to command you what is fitting ..."*** However, Paul did not swell with pride. He was humble about the power and authority God had given him. Paul was careful and wise in his use of that power. Instead of demanding, Paul appealed to Philemon ***"for love's sake ..."***

Love is **more powerful** than any order or command one person can give another. Paul had led Philemon to Christ years earlier (Philemon 1:19). They had a special bond of love. Philemon had come to the love of Christ through the love of Paul. Philemon had learned about God's love and the love of brothers for each other through Paul's ministry. Paul had been a great example of God's love to Philemon. Paul's words, *"yet for love's sake I rather appeal to you,"* had a special meaning to Philemon. He got the message. He understood what Paul was asking.

Paul wanted Philemon to do the **right thing** on the basis of love. Paul knew what Philemon should do: forgive Onesimus, receive him as a brother in Christ and give him freedom from slavery. That was within

Philemon's power as a slave owner.

"For perhaps he departed for a while for this purpose, that you might receive him forever, no longer as a slave but more than a slave—a beloved brother, especially to me but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord." Philemon 1:15-16

Paul stressed the basic respect for humanity and the power of Christian love in that last statement: "... *no longer as a slave but more than a slave—a beloved brother ...*" See how gentle Paul was in his argument? Paul tempered raw power with divine love.

Paul also expressed confidence in Philemon's ability to do the right thing.

"Having confidence in your obedience, I write to you, knowing that you will do even more than I say." Philemon 1:21

Paul was respectful of Philemon and Onesimus. Paul was gentle and careful in his counsel to Philemon. Paul was bold in his stand for what was right and wise in his use of Apostolic power.

Each of us has some power in life. We may be a pastor, teacher, elder, deacon, board member, choir leader, youth leader, husband, wife, father, mother, grandparent, older brother or sister, employer, or supervisor. We may even hold governmental power as a mayor, governor, president, judge, legislator, or police officer. As Christians, we look to God as the Author of all our power. We seek His Face about the use of that power. We have a responsibility, just as Paul

did, to use our power for truth and right. We have an obligation to respect all people. We have a duty to be wise and gentle in the use of our heavenly and earthly power.

Paul is an **excellent** example of one who used power and authority well, but he wasn't the best example. Jesus Christ is **THE EXAMPLE** of using power and authority to perfection. Jesus was strong and gentle. He was wise and careful. He was demanding and merciful. Jesus Christ is The Power of all life. He is God! He thinks it and it is done. He desires it and it happens. He wants it and all creation does His bidding. Yet, even with all that power, Christ does everything **“on the basis of love.”**

Jesus told people to come to Him and He would give them rest. He told them that His yoke was easy. The secret to our peace in Christ is that Christ is “in” you and you are “in Christ. Christ in you is the hope of glory. Christ in you is the power for living the GraceLife.

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