

How Authority Is Lost

There is a question that doesn't get asked nearly enough.

If God gave mankind dominion over the earth — governmental, real, significant authority — how did the enemy end up with so much of it? How did the one who was created as a servant end up operating as a ruler? How did nations fall under demonic influence? How does darkness hold so much ground in a world that God placed in human hands?

The answer is both sobering and clarifying: it was given. Not taken. Given.

The enemy cannot seize what God delegated to humanity. He has no authority to override human will, no power to simply overrun the dominion God established. What he can do — what he has always done — is deceive, manipulate, and wait for humans to hand it over themselves.

Understanding how authority is lost is one of the most important things a follower of Christ can grasp. Because you cannot reclaim ground you don't know you've surrendered.



WHAT HAPPENED IN THE GARDEN

The first transfer of authority happened in a garden, and it has been studied and debated for thousands of years. But there is a layer to it that often gets missed — and it changes everything.

God had given Adam and Eve clear instruction. They could eat from any tree in the garden. One was off limits. The consequence of eating from it was stated plainly: “You shall surely die.”

When the serpent came to Eve, he did something precise and deliberate. He didn't attack God with obvious lies. He questioned what God actually said. “Did God really say...?” And Eve's answer revealed the problem before she ever took a bite.

She said God told them they should not eat the fruit, or even touch it, lest they die. But God didn't say that. God said they would “surely die.” Eve changed “surely die” to “lest you die” — stripping the certainty out of it, softening the consequence, making it sound more like a possibility than a promise. And she added something God never said — that they couldn't even touch it. She was working from a version of God's Word that wasn't quite right. And because it wasn't quite right, it couldn't hold.

When the serpent replied, “You will not surely die,” he directly contradicted God. And Eve believed him. Not because the lie was convincing on its own — but because she

didn't have the Word of God hidden deeply enough in her heart to recognize the distortion. She was already working from a weakened version of what God had said. The serpent just pushed on what was already loose.

What caused the first sin was not primarily weakness or hunger or curiosity. It was the absence of God's Word, deeply hidden, deeply known, deeply trusted. Eve took poison to her soul because she didn't have an anchor strong enough to hold when the storm came.

"Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You." — Psalm 119:11 NKJV

Adam and Eve did not hide God's Word in their hearts. And when the serpent came, there was nothing there to resist him with.

◆ ◆ ◆ IT IS WRITTEN

Now consider what happened thousands of years later in a different wilderness.

Jesus, fully God and fully man, was led into the desert and tempted for forty days. He was hungry. He was tired. He was alone. And the enemy came with every tool at his disposal — physical need, pride, the promise of power.

Every single time, Jesus answered the same way.

"It is written."

Not "I think." Not "I feel." Not a vague recollection of something God once said. It is written. Specific. Precise. Deeply known. Immediately accessible. The Word of God hidden so completely in His heart that every temptation — no matter how sophisticated — met an immovable wall.

Eve, working from a softened, slightly distorted version of God's Word, fell. And Adam — who was standing right there, who heard every word, who watched it happen — said nothing and took a bite himself. Neither of them had the Word of God hidden deeply enough to hold when the storm came. Jesus, armed with the Word exactly as it was given, stood. All three were tempted. The difference was not willpower. The difference was the Word.

Jesus didn't just show us how to resist temptation. He showed us what it looks like to carry authority that cannot be surrendered — because the foundation it rests on cannot be moved.

"For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart." — Hebrews 4:12 ESV

◆ ◆ ◆ HOW AUTHORITY TRANSFERS

What Adam and Eve did in the garden set a pattern that has repeated throughout human history. Authority transfers when humans choose to obey a voice other than God's.

Paul makes this explicit in Romans: you become a servant of whatever you obey. Not what you believe. Not what you intend. What you obey. The moment you submit to something — whether a voice, a craving, a fear, a desire — you grant it authority over you. And whatever you grant authority over you, you have effectively placed in a position of rule.

“Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness?” — Romans 6:16 ESV

This is why sin is never just a moral failure. Every sin is a door. Every act of disobedience is a transfer. Every time you choose the enemy's suggestion over God's Word, you are handing something over — ground, influence, access — that was never meant to leave your hands.

And the enemy knows this. Which is why he never leads with his worst. He never opens with the thing that would obviously destroy you. He opens with something small. Something that seems harmless. Something that barely registers as a decision at all. Just a small compromise. Just a little dishonesty. Just a tiny bit of giving in, just this once, just in this situation. The door is barely cracked. It doesn't seem like a big deal. But small doors let big things in. And once a door is open, it doesn't close itself.

◆ ◆ ◆ WHAT YOU TAKE, TAKES YOU

There is a spiritual reality to sin that most people never consider.

When you take something that isn't yours — whether through stealing, deception, manipulation, or any act outside of God's order — you don't just get the thing. You get everything that comes with it. There is a weight attached to sin that transfers along with the act. A darkness. A claim. Something that was never meant to be yours now has a connection to you, and that connection opens a door.

Think about it this way. Imagine someone steals something small — something that seems insignificant. A few dollars. Something nobody will miss. The flesh says it's not a big deal. Nobody got hurt. Move on.

But in the spirit, something happened. That object belonged to someone else. It was assigned to them — provided for them, in a sense, by the God who is the source of all good things. When you reached out and took it outside of His order, you didn't just move an object. You made an agreement. You said — with your hands if not your mouth — that you operate outside of God's authority. That your need, your want, your decision overrides the order He established.

And attached to that agreement is a spiritual weight. Like a dark cloud that transfers along with what you took. You can't see it. You may not feel it immediately. But something came with what you took. An open door. A claim the enemy now has access to because you stepped outside of the covering of God's order.

This is not superstition. This is the spiritual reality Paul describes when he says you become a servant of whatever you obey. The act of taking what isn't yours is an act of obedience to the wrong voice. And obedience always carries consequences — in the spirit, in the authority you carry, in the ground you now have to reclaim.

God's commands were never arbitrary restrictions. They were a covering. Step outside of them and you step outside of His protection — and into territory that has consequences you didn't sign up for.

Scripture shows this pattern clearly. When God provided manna in the wilderness, He gave Israel a specific instruction — take only what you need for today. Don't store it. Don't take more than your portion. He would provide again tomorrow.

Some didn't listen. They took more than they were given. And the next morning, what they had hoarded was full of worms and smelled rotten.

They didn't just end up with spoiled food. They ended up with something foul, something that had turned, something that brought decay into what was supposed to be a place of provision. That is the picture. What God assigns to you is clean. What you seize outside of His order has a way of rotting — not always immediately, not always visibly, but eventually the smell finds its way out.

God was not being arbitrary with the manna instruction. He was showing His people something about the nature of operating within His order versus outside of it. What comes from His hand is life. What you seize outside of His boundary brings something else with it entirely.



THE COMMANDMENTS AS A COVERING

God didn't leave His people to figure out the covering on their own. He made it explicit.

The Ten Commandments are often understood primarily as restrictions — things you are not allowed to do, lines you are not supposed to cross. And in the Old Testament, that is exactly what they were. The law was the law. But there is another dimension to them that is worth seeing.

Each commandment also protected something. Each one was a specific covering against a specific kind of authority transfer. No other gods — don't hand your allegiance to another spiritual power. Don't steal — don't reach outside of God's order. Don't commit adultery — protect the covenant. Don't covet — don't let desire become an agreement in your heart.

God was not only setting boundaries. He was guarding His people from the exact kinds of agreements and transfers that would cost them the authority He had given them. We will come back to the commandments in more depth later. But for now — the principle is this: every act of sin is a step outside of God's covering. And outside of His covering, things attach themselves to you that were never supposed to.



THE WITCHCRAFT NOBODY TALKS ABOUT

There is one specific way authority gets transferred that almost nobody recognizes for what it is.

Gossip.

Most people treat gossip as a social problem — something rude, something that damages relationships, something to be avoided for the sake of kindness. But the Bible treats it as something far more serious. It appears in lists alongside murder, hatred, and rebellion. God says it is something He hates. And when you look at what gossip actually does, the reason becomes clear.

Gossip is the manipulation of a perception that doesn't belong to you.

When you gossip about someone — whether you realize it or not — you are attempting to alter how another person sees them. You are reaching into someone else's mind and rearranging their thoughts about a third person. You are exerting control over something you have no authority over. You are, in the most precise sense of the word, practicing manipulation — and manipulation is the language of witchcraft.

This is not an exaggeration. Witchcraft at its core is the attempt to exert control outside of God's ordained authority — to manipulate outcomes, perceptions, and people through illegitimate means. Gossip does exactly that. It just does it in ordinary conversation, with ordinary words, in ordinary situations, which is precisely why it is so dangerous. It doesn't feel like a spiritual transaction. But it is.

And every time you participate in it — either as the one speaking or the one listening without resistance — you are opening a door and granting access to something that was never supposed to enter.

“There are six things the Lord hates, seven that are detestable to him: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked schemes, feet that are quick to rush into evil, a false witness who pours out lies and a person who stirs up conflict in the community.” — Proverbs 6:16–19 NIV

The last one on that list — a person who stirs up conflict in the community — is the gossiper. In the same list as murder and lying and evil scheming. God doesn't rank it lower. He lists it in the same breath.



BLIND TO THE GROUND WE'RE GIVING

One of the reasons authority is so easily lost is that most people have no idea it's happening.

They think sin is breaking a rule. They don't know it's opening a door. They think small compromises don't count. They don't realize small doors let big things in. They don't connect the struggles they're experiencing — the oppression, the bondage, the patterns they can't seem to break — to the ground they surrendered somewhere along the way.

I have felt this myself. The realization of how much ground I had given without knowing it — how many small agreements I had made, how many doors I had left cracked, how much of my own authority I had handed over through carelessness and sin and the gradual drift that happens when the mind isn't being renewed daily — was sobering. Not condemnation. Sobering. Because you cannot reclaim what you don't know you lost.

And then there is the deeper reality: the enemy was using my own authority against God. The dominion God placed in human hands — the governmental authority He delegated to His image-bearers — gets weaponized against His Kingdom every time a human surrenders it through sin, idolatry, or agreement with darkness. We don't just lose ground. We become the means by which the enemy holds it.

This is why Paul says to give no place to the devil. Not “give him less place.” No place. Because any place given becomes a foothold. And a foothold becomes a stronghold. And a stronghold becomes a territory that feels impossible to retake.

“Give no place to the devil.” — Ephesians 4:27 NKJV

The word “place” in the Greek is *topos* — a territory, a location, a foothold. The devil must be given place. He cannot take it. Which means every foothold he holds, he holds because someone handed it to him.



THE MIND IS THE FIRST BATTLEFIELD

There is one more dimension to this that cannot be skipped.

Most authority is not lost through dramatic acts of rebellion. It is lost through what the mind is allowed to dwell on.

Proverbs says it plainly: as a man thinks in his heart, so is he. Not as he intends. Not as he hopes to be. As he thinks. The mind is not a passive observer of life — it is a shaping force. What you consistently think, you eventually become. Where your mind goes consistently, your life eventually follows.

The enemy knows this. Which is why so much of his strategy targets thought before it targets behavior. Get the mind moving in the wrong direction and the behavior follows naturally, without force, without obvious temptation — just the accumulated momentum of a mind that was never renewed.

This is why walking in the Spirit is not an occasional activity. It is not something you do on Sunday and set down on Monday. It is something that has to happen all of the time — which means it starts with the daily, non-negotiable renewal of the mind. Prepping for a spiritual battle every single day. Never ceasing to pray. Always giving thanks. Letting the peace of God rule as the indicator of whether the Spirit is leading or the flesh has retaken the wheel.

A mind that is not being actively renewed is a mind that is drifting. And a drifting mind is giving ground it doesn't even know it's surrendering.

“Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.” — Romans 12:2 ESV



THE GOOD NEWS ABOUT LOST GROUND

Here is what all of this has been building toward.

Lost authority can be reclaimed.

God never revoked the dominion mandate. Nowhere in Scripture does He take back what He gave. The assignment stands. The authority stands. What was lost through sin and surrender can be recovered through repentance, through the restored circuit, through walking in the Spirit rather than feeding the flesh.

Repentance is not just saying sorry. It is the act of turning — away from the agreement, away from the open door, away from the voice that isn't God's — and back toward the One whose voice governs everything. It is the act of taking back ground. Closing doors. Revoking access that was never meant to be granted.

And then there is the deeper reason the ground can be reclaimed at all: Jesus came as a man to legally reclaim what man had lost. Authority on earth was given to humanity, and what humanity lost, humanity had to recover. The incarnation was not incidental. It was the legal mechanism by which everything Adam surrendered could be reclaimed.

“The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil.” — 1 John 3:8 ESV

He destroyed the works of the devil. Past tense. Settled. And after His resurrection, He declared what that victory meant:

“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me.” — Matthew 28:18 ESV

All of it. Every bit of what Adam surrendered. Every claim the enemy had accumulated through human agreement and idolatry across every nation and every generation — reclaimed, legally, completely, by the Last Adam. And then He did something that changes everything for every person who belongs to Him:

He gave it to His Church.

Not independent authority. Not authority that originates from us or belongs to us in ourselves. Delegated authority — the same way an ambassador carries the full weight of a government behind him, not because of who he is personally, but because of who sent him. We carry Christ's authority because we are in Christ. The moment we forget that distinction is the moment we step back into the same trap Adam fell into — reaching for authority on our own terms rather than receiving it on God's.

“Behold, I give you authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you.” — Luke 10:19 NKJV

“And He put all things under His feet and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body.” — Ephesians 1:22–23 ESV

The authority was reclaimed by Jesus and deposited into His people. Not kept at a distance. Not held in reserve. Given. To the Church. To every believer who walks in the restored circuit, who hides the Word in their heart, who refuses to surrender ground to the enemy.

The stolen goods have been reclaimed. The authority has been restored. The dominion God always intended for His people is available — fully, completely, legally — to every person who walks in the restored circuit through Jesus Christ.

The enemy doesn't want you to know how much authority you actually carry. A believer who understands their authority and walks in it is one of the most dangerous things to the kingdom of darkness that exists.

Which is exactly why he has spent so long trying to make sure you never find out.

You cannot lose what you are guarding. And you cannot guard what you don't know you have.