

# NO DOMINION OVER YOUR FAITH

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Daily devotions written by Pastor Thomas Smith

“Not for that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy: for by faith ye stand.”

II Corinthians 1:24.

Paul, in writing to the church at Corinth, is explaining why he is taking the course he has chosen as far as visiting them is concerned. He did not think it was wise for him to come at the time he had previously planned. In giving them his reasoning, Paul stated that he did not intend to “have dominion over” their faith. Paul had some strong words for the Corinthian believers in his first epistle. There were many things in that congregation that needed correction and called for instruction. Undoubtedly, some misunderstood or resented his directness. However, he wanted them to know that he did not want to lord over them. Rather, Paul saw himself as a helper of their joy. His desire was to help them find the joy and victory that comes from obedience and surrender. But they must be accountable for their own faith, “for by faith ye stand.”

The role of the pastor, or spiritual leader, is not to control the belief of those he leads. There is a difference between love and concern, and dominion or rule. Though the pastor is charged with the spiritual guidance and protection of his people, every individual is responsible for his decisions and spiritual progress. This principle brings a number of important subjects to mind.

First, church members can misunderstand the concern and advice of the pastor. His love and interest can be misinterpreted as being overbearing. Yet, God has given the pastor the oversight of the flock of God. The true shepherd is not a hireling. His work

is not just a vocation, but also a spiritual calling.

Second, it is possible for pastors to be guilty of being too demanding and controlling.

The New Testament teaches that pastors are leaders, counselors, shepherds, and overseers, but not controllers of God's people. Whether through pride or ignorance, pastors can overstep their spiritual authority.

Finally, church members can rely so much on the counsel and support of their spiritual leaders that they do not grow in their individual wisdom and discernment. Paul said in our text, "by faith ye stand." All of us are responsible to study God's Word and learn to apply the principles of Scripture to our lives. It is a wise Christian who seeks the advice of his pastor, but he should also be growing and standing stronger in the Lord.