

Last week we saw how sharing is a matter of the heart, this week we turn our attention on another important subject: power.

Many people - often especially Christians - have strong opinions on power; some desire it, others shun it. What we will do today is begin to look at this subject from the Bible, to start to think God's thoughts.

**Power: the capacity to effect intended results**

Power to...

Power for...

Or power over....

In business, power might mean the authority to hire and fire, to implement policies or to buy and sell.

In international politics it is measured in terms of economic wealth or military might, both of which allow the nations possessing them to influence or control lesser states.

The Bible gives us some important starting points about Power:

- 1) **all power belongs to God** Matt 6.13, 26.64, 2 chron 28
- 2) **God shares his power with humanity** cp Gen 1.28ff + others
- 3) **He gives us the freedom to choose how we will exercise power:**
  - a. In the service of our neighbour
  - b. In prideful self-deification

**Bruce almighty clip & explanation**

There is nothing wrong with aspiring to greatness and power – we just need to make sure we have the right definition of it!

**Philippians 2.3-11**

***The cross flushes out our attitudes to power:***

Mk 8.31 1<sup>st</sup> telling of cross – Peter argues with Jesus

Mk 9.30-34 2<sup>nd</sup> telling – disciples argue about who is greatest

Mk 10.32-34 3<sup>rd</sup> telling – James and John want promotion & position, time for Jesus to spell it out again!

Three paths for use and abuse of power:

- 1) **coercion**: people forced by external means, whether by threat of violence or bullying or loss of goods or freedoms
- 2) **manipulation**: people made to act against their will, but without really realising it – people seduced, deceived and in our day given so much information that they feel that only an expert can know, so they follow the clear instructions when they come around – they hope they are doing right, but feel uneasy and that there are things they are not being told:
  - a. In the book of Revelation these two are characterised by the dragon (12) and the harlot (17): the dragon intimidates, threatens and persecutes the people, and those that can stand up to that are then misled, deceived and seduced by the harlot, who looks beautiful, but brings slavery and corruption.
- 3) The third option is **authority**: power exercised for the common good, by those who are in some way accountable and answerable to those ruled.
  - a. Mankind was given power to rule, but it was to be exercised under God's authority. The principle continues today – the only people it is safe to have in authority, are those who are **under** authority – in our country we have a democracy, so our government is ultimately accountable to the people.
  - b. With this in mind, we have the power to choose, it would be wrong to abdicate that power – we have freedom of choice according to conscience, it is vital that we use it.

Let's remind ourselves that

- 4) **all power belongs to God**
- 5) **God shares his power with humanity**
- 6) **He gives us the freedom to choose how we will exercise power:**

Let us use whatever power we have to love, to serve, to protect freedom and choice, valuing the dignity and value of all people – in this way, it will be used for the reasons it was given.