

Coach House Church

BEACONS

POWER STRUGGLE

8TH DECEMBER 2020

Power. We all want it, we all need a certain amount of it but too much is a bad thing. It has been said that absolute power corrupts absolutely.

This is certainly what we see in front of us. Every type of government that we have ever seen, even if it has "safeguards" in place, becomes corrupt and becomes about money. Democracy is meant to have the safeguard that the government can be voted out but has still become about money because rich people are very convincing and manage to get their own in power to keep the rich rich and the poor poor. Communism was supposed to be about everyone being equal - a lovely sentiment, but one that saw some living in luxury and others starving. Taking back control was a major sentiment behind the Brexit movement, which so far hasn't gone very well.

We do need a certain amount of power for our mental health. A scientist named Judith Rodin has done extensive research in this area and it is vital to have a little control or a sense of autonomy. She performed research among those in a convalescent home and found that when people were given a sense of control it helped them live longer. It's not good for us to feel totally out of control and that can lead to other mental health problems like anorexia or bulimia, because how much we eat is definitely something we can control.

However, too much power is also bad. If we have too much power we start to think too highly of ourselves and we don't think enough about God. If we are given the power to abuse people, without consequence, we will. There was a controversial study performed by Stanford university in 1971 to see the effects of perceived power. They performed an experiment where some people were prisoners and others were guards. The guards began to control the prisoners psychologically and used their power to make others do dehumanising things within a few days. They used their power very cruelly.

So let's look at the first ever sin, when Eve took and ate the fruit in the garden of Eden. The reason she ate it gives us such a deep insight into human behaviour since it was the first sin ever committed. This was when there was only one

thing that she could possibly do wrong. She was living in innocence, completely equal to her husband and completely at peace with nature. And then Satan convinced her that it wasn't enough. Satan convinced her that she wanted to be God of her own life. She wanted to be more in control. So she ate the fruit. And the result of that was the curse that God gave as a consequence.

The curse can be found in Genesis 3 and I will read from verse 16 "To the woman he said, "I will make your pains in childbearing very severe; with painful labor you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you."

Now at first reading there is something that doesn't quite fit. Why would it be bad for the woman's desire to be for her husband? Surely this is a good thing?

The word used here for desire is used in two other places in the bible. One is in song of Solomon, when speaking of sexual desire of a beloved. The other is in Genesis 4:7 which says "If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must rule over it." This is talking about the desire sin has to control us. We were all once slaves to sin and sin had power over us. So this is talking about the woman wanting to manipulate and control the man and be above him.

The thing is that all sin affects others. Even if we think we sin in private and it doesn't affect anyone, it definitely affects us and it affects others. Sometimes God takes away these consequences but sometimes he allows them to stand. Eve's sin caused an endless power struggle between people.

We can see this power struggle today with feminism "standing up to the patriarchy". We can see that women feel that they need more control. They feel that they have been oppressed. There have been many times in history when oppressed groups have taken back control and have been as bad or worse to their oppressors.

There are also many many relationships where there is an imbalance of power, which at its extremity leads to domestic violence, but even when it is just a small imbalance of power it leads to misery, usually on both parts.

The desire for control is where lots of sin stems from. This is why we get envious of others, because they have things that make them look better or make other people like them more. This is why we lie, to try to manipulate situations in a way that we want. This is sometimes why we lust, because we want to make someone want us. We all have times where we think that the world would be better if we were in control.

When I was a child it was always my ambition to be ruler of all the world and my best friend was to be my little sidekick alongside me. I thought that if I was

in control of the world nothing could possibly go wrong in my own life. Now this is obviously just a childish dream but it does show something of who I was at that age, that I wanted to rule the world, and at some stage or other I think we have all felt this.

The problem with this is, that all the time we want to be in control, all the time we try to be God of our own lives, our sinful nature will come to the fore. We will let the sins that trap us lead the way and we will be powerless to stop it. Romans 6:16-18 says "Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one you obey—whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness? But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you have come to obey from your heart the pattern of teaching that has now claimed your allegiance. You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness."

As Christians we still struggle with sin, we still do things wrong, but we know the ultimate battle has been won. We know that at the end of the day we will be made perfect and complete and we know that work has already started. We know that we are on the road but that it's a journey.

Jesus showed us this. He submitted himself to becoming a human and to death on a cross. He walked humbly, even washing His disciples' feet. He didn't demand control or put Himself above others. He had authority from God and He used it properly. He didn't abuse His power. He showed us that to truly submit is to truly be empowered and to truly live is to die to yourself.

So to get control of our lives back, to become all that we can be, we have to surrender to God. We have to submit our free will to our heavenly father. Only then will we see the transformations in our lives that need to happen. We will see our desires changing, so we won't be desperate to be in control of every situation, but we will be able to let go sometimes.

Let's let go of control. Let's let God help us see that we don't need to be in charge of every situation. Let's reverse the curse of the first sin and submit ourselves to God and like Ephesians 5:12 says "submit ourselves to one another out of reverence for Christ."



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