**The Use of Power Among God’s People**

Ezek. 34:1-4

Introduction:

1. The Bible has more to say about the use of power than many other subjects, yet we do not hear so much about it.

2. We may hear sermons about the gospel being the power of God to salvation and then we interpret “the gospel” to be a set of rules to be obeyed or a domineering God will forever destroy us.

3. Our view of power tends to be reflected in our view of God and the gospel. Our view of power is reflected in our view of husbands ruling over wives and of parents disciplining children. It is reflected in our perceptions about discipline in the church and in our understanding of leadership.

4. And we are all bent, damaged by the hammer of abusive power. We have come from families, organizations, governments, and even churches that have bent and dented and molded us in negative ways.

5. But what, to me is even more frightening, is that I have been that hammer that has bent and dented and damaged others. They carry the scars of my misuse of power.

Discussion:

I. Power is inherent in our being human.

 A. Power was given to us by God in the very beginning.

 1. In Gen. 1:26, 28 God said, “Let them rule over. . . Be fruitful and multiply and fill

 the earth, and subdue it; and rule over . . ..”

 2. The power that God gave was good.

 3. God is powerful and He uses His power for good.

 B. A usurper of power entered into the Garden of Eden.

 1. He enticed Eve to use her power negatively.

 2. He did so by the use of a lie. Deception is always a negative use of power. This

 is why truth is so firmly advocated throughout Scripture.

 3. Eve assumed the serpent to be good, to be trustworthy. She saw the fruit of the

 tree to be good, a delight to the eyes and desirable to make one wise. Her

 assumption created her vulnerability.

 C. This is a mistake that we all have made. We assume that an individual with power

 must have good character.

 1. Power comes from many sources.

 2. From physical presence—physical size, appearance.

 3. From wealth, status, reputation. A child

 4. From verbal, emotional, knowledge, skill, intellect.

 5. We trust our physician. He/she is good looking, wealthy, knowledgeable.

 6. Combine this with biblical knowledge. A preacher usually has verbal, emotional,

 knowledge, skill. If he is young, tall, dark and handsome he has great power.

 7. We assume people with power are trustworthy. Children should be able to

 assume that a parent, coach, Bible class teacher is trustworthy. Our assumption

 that they have good character makes us vulnerable. Is it any wonder that it is

 character traits that characterize those qualified to serve as shepherds? See 1

 Tim. 3; Titus 1.

II. Power used inappropriately exploits trust.

 A. It wounds; it is destructive; it kills.

 B. When is power being used inappropriately?

 1. When you use your power for your own ends. The shepherds of Ezek. 34 feed

 themselves when they should have been feeding the flock. They ate the fat

 and clothed themselves with the wool. They did not strengthen the sick, heal the

 diseased, bring back the scattered, or seek for the lost.

 2. The father or mother who uses a child for their own sexual, financial, emotional,

 benefit is an abuser. A coach, elder, preacher, teacher, or any other who takes

 advantage for personal benefit has become a beast (Ezek. 34:7-10).

 C. Like the serpent they convince that what is evil is good and what is good is evil.

 1. “I hit my wife because she . . .”

 2. The person who abuses power deceive themselves and so deceive those they

 take advantage of. They justify their illegitimate use of power.

 3. Is this the essence of a seared conscience? Cf. 1 Tim. 4:2.

 D. We who are abused want what the abuser promises.

 1. The sexual abuser promises security, love, acceptance.

 2. The government leader who abuses promises good things.

 3. “Is it not the rich who oppress you and personally drag you into court?” (James

 2:6).

 4. False teachers exploit with false words, but many follow them (2 Pet. 2:1-3; 2

 Tim. 4:3-4). We want to believe what they say.

 E. Sometimes we protect those who abuse their power.

 1. A church leader who sexually abuses another. We want to protect by not saying

 anything. What about the truth?

 2. But it will bring the congregation down. It will hinder the accomplishment of our

 goals. And so the abuser is protected. What about the vulnerable?

 3. If I understand the Scripture it is the vulnerable that we are to protect (Zech. 7:9-

 10; 8:16-17).

 4. Protecting the vulnerable is pure and undefiled religion (James 1:27).

 5. The design of government is to protect the rights of the innocent (Rom. 13:4;

 1 Pet. 2:14).

 6. Among the people of God the vulnerable will be protected!! (Ezek. 34:11ff). The

 Good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep (Jn. 10:11-12).

 7. The people of God do not silence the victims (Acts 6:1ff).

III. Power used appropriately strengthens the weak, binds up the broken hearted, encourages, edifies and causes growth (Ezek. 34:23-31).

 A. The words that proceed from our mouth are to give encouragement (Eph. 4:29-32).

 B. We are to show hospitality to strangers, remember the prisoners and those ill

 treated (Heb. 13:2-3).

 C. We are to admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be

 patient with everyone (1 Thess. 5:14-15).

 D. This is what the Lord has done. He has taken His great power and used it for us,

 the vulnerable, the victimized, the abused, and down-trodden (Phil. 2:3-10).

 His appeal is to come unto me all you who are weary and are heavy laden and I will

 give you rest (Matt. 11:28).

Conclusion:

1. We need to pray for forgiveness for those times that we have abused power.

2. We need to confess our sin when we find the hammer of abuse in our hand. We need to repent of the destruction we have caused.

3. We need to covenant with our God to use power in a way that honors others and glorifies Him.