



NEW LIFE

BIBLE-PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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"For the Word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ" (Rev 1:9)

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POWER THROUGH WEAKNESS

"...for my strength is made perfect in weakness." (2 Cor 12:9)

My dear Readers,

We live in a society which worships POWER. There are three major human ambitions – the pursuit of money, fame and influence – and all of these are a concealed drive for power. We see this thirst for power everywhere – in politics and public life, in big business and in corporations, in professions and even in primitive societies in which the *shaman* or witch doctor trades secret power for money.

Sad to say but it is true. We also see it in the Church of Jesus Christ – in top-level ecclesiastical power struggles, in denominational disputes, in some local churches in which the pastors hold the reins of power in their own hands and refuse to share it either with his associate, assistant, preachers, lay leaders, or still less, with his congregants. We see it in different Fellowship or Bible study groups, which silently promote themselves to be the "best" group in the church. To borrow the words of James, *"My brethren, these things ought not so to be"* (James 3:10). We do not promote ourselves to the point of intimidating other weaker groups in the church. We should reach out to them and lend them a hand, if necessary. There shouldn't be any striving in the Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 1:10). We are to give the same care one for another (1 Corinthians 12:25, 26). Furthermore, we see it in para-church organizations, which dream of expanding into world empires. And we also see it in the pulpit, which is a very dangerous platform for any self-glorifying preacher of God's Word to occupy.

Power is more intoxicating than alcohol and more addictive than LSD or any other deadly drug. As Lord Acton rightly said, *"Power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely."* Lord Acton was a 19th century politician, a friend and adviser of Prime Minister Gladstone. He was very disturbed in his day to see democracy being undermined by this lust for power. Though he was a Roman Catholic, he opposed the decision of the first Vatican Council in 1870 to attribute infallibility to the Pope. He saw it as power corrupting the Roman Church.

We may point our finger at the Roman Church, but do you know that Evangelical churches are not spared either? Looking at the evangelical scene today, I am scared of the contemporary evangelical hunger for power, even the quest for the power of the Holy Spirit. To be honest, why do the people of God want to receive power from above? (Acts 1:8) Is it honestly power for witness? Power for holy living? Power for humble service? Or is it really a mask for personal ambition so that we may boost our own ego? Minister to our own self-importance? Extend our influence, to impress, to dominate and to manipulate?

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The lust for power is a very dangerous thing and even some evangelism can be a disguised form of imperialism. This kind of sinful extension of power or authority over others in the interests of domination, which has no concern for the imperial majesty of our Saviour, can build human empires instead of building the Kingdom of God. Let us be warned of it!

The Bible warns us against the use and abuse of power. One Old Testament example was Uzziah, king of Judah (2 Kings 14:21; 2 Chronicles 26:1). He was one of Amaziah's sons, whom the people made king of Judah in his father's stead. His long reign of about 52 years was the most prosperous excepting that of Jehosaphat since the time of Solomon. He was a vigorous and able ruler, *"and his name spread abroad even to the entering in of Egypt"* (2 Chronicles 26:8).

In the earlier part of his reign, under the influence of Zechariah, he was faithful to Jehovah, and *"did that which was right in the sight of the Lord"* (2 Kings 15:15:3; 2 Chronicles 26:4, 5). However, toward the close of his long life *"his heart was lifted up to his destruction,"* and he wantonly invaded the priest's office and went into the sanctuary to offer incense on the golden altar (2 Chronicles 26:16). Azariah, the high priest saw the tendency of such a daring act on the part of the king, and with a band of 80 priests he withstood him (2 Chronicles 26:17). God struck him with leprosy. He was driven from the temple and compelled to reside in *"a several (i.e. separated) house"* to the day of his death (2 Chronicles 26:19-21). Pride had led him to his downfall (Daniel 4:30; Acts 12:21-23).

In contrast, in the New Testament, Jesus was the perfect symbol of the weakness of humility. In responding to James' and John's request (Mark 10:35-40), Jesus said, *"Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them. But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister: And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all. For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many"* (Mark 10:42-45).

In the secular world, the standard of greatness is POWER – Do what you like and do it to anybody. This is how the world assesses a man's greatness - by the number of people whom he controls, by his intellectual standing and his academic eminence, by the number of committees of which he is a member, by the number of years he has been in the church, by the size of his bank balance, the possessions which he has amassed, and by how many people he can impose his will upon.

But that is not what greatness is and how it is measured in the kingdom of God. Jesus said, *"But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister: And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all"* (Mark 10:43, 44).

In the kingdom of God, greatness is measured by SERVICE. Greatness is not what service I can extract, but what service I can give.

A good example of humble service is recorded in John's Gospel 13:1-17. The background of the passage is found in Luke 22:24. Jesus was having his last meal with His disciples and a dispute arose among them as to which of them was to be regarded as the greatest. In order to teach them the meaning of servanthood, He humbled Himself and washed the feet of the disciples.

Palestine's roads were dusty in dry season and muddy in wet season. The shoes ordinary people wore were sandals which gave very little protection against the dust or mud of the...

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roads. For that reason, there were always big waterpots at the door of a house. A servant was there with a basin and a towel to wash the dusty or muddy feet of guests as they came in.

Now Jesus had no servants. And on that night of the last supper, His disciples got themselves into such a state of competitive pride that none of them was willing to take on the duty of washing one another's feet. Jesus, seeing it, took the opportunity, did what none of them was prepared to do. After washing their feet, He said to them, *"Know ye what I have done to you? Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you"* (John 13:12-15).

The humble service of our Lord ought to make us think. So often in the church, troubles arise because someone does not get his or her place. A member of the choir is not given a solo and will not sing anymore. A member of the fellowship is not voted in as a committee member or he is not called to chair a meeting or be in charge of a cell group, gets hurt and dejected, and will not come to the fellowship anymore.

Sad to say but it is true. Many want to be leaders but not many want to be servants. You know, the world is full of people who are standing on their dignity when they ought to be kneeling at the feet of their brethren.

Jesus came to serve and not to be served and to give His life a ransom for many (Mark 10:45). Yes, He left heaven's glory, came down to earth, became a servant and died a cruel death for you and me (Philippians 2:6-8).

The message is crystal clear. We are called to be servants of the Lord. Greatness is measured by service. So if you want to be great in the kingdom of God, you must learn to be a servant of all. The next time when you are tempted to think of your dignity, your prestige, your position, your privileges and your rights, look at the picture of the Son of God, girt with a towel, kneeling at His disciples' feet, washing.

Jesus is our perfect model. We don't pursue power the way the world does it. We are mindful of the words of Jeremiah to Baruch – *"And seekest thou great things for thyself? Seek them not"* (Jeremiah 45:5). However, Christians seek divine power for Christian service, and this power comes through human weakness. Paul said, *"For when I am weak, then am I strong"* (2 Corinthians 12:10). God's divine power operates best in the arena of human weakness. In rebuilding the Temple of the Lord, God said to Zerubbabel that it was *"Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit"* (Zechariah 4:6).

My fellow-pilgrim, as you live for Christ daily, may you be reminded that the secret to divine power in Christian living and service to the King of kings and the Lord of lords lies in the words of Paul – *"Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me"* (2 Corinthians 12:9). Power through weakness! Yes, God has chosen what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; what is weak in the world to shame the strong; what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God (1 Corinthians 1:27-29). Amen.

"Nearly all men can stand adversity, but if you want to test a man's character, give him power" (Abraham Lincoln, 1809-1865)

Rev Colin Wong, S'pore
(adapted from Evangel B-P Church bulletin dated 3 August 2008)
(sourced from: John Stott, "Power Through Weakness," 1996)

WELCOME TO NEW LIFE B-P CHURCH LONDON
CHURCH THEME: WORK OUT YOUR OWN SALVATION WITH FEAR
AND TREMBLING. (Philippians 2:12)

Our worship services begin promptly at **11.00 am and 4.00 pm.**

Please stay back for Bible Study and fellowship lunch after the morning worship and for tea after the evening service. Do invite your friends to come to Church.

Worship Services			WELCOME
Morning	<i>Today: 07/09/2008</i>	<i>Next Week: 14/09/2008</i>	We extend a warm welcome to all worshippers this Lord's Day. We like to welcome Eld & Mrs Sng to our morning worship services last Lord's Day.
<i>Chairman:</i>	Jonathan Kim	Pr Mark Chen	
<i>Preacher:</i>	Rev Yeo Seow Phong	Rev Yeo Seow Phong	
<i>Message:</i>	I Will Sup With Him	Divisions Among You	
<i>Text:</i>	Revelation 3:14-22	1 Corinthians 1:1-17	
<i>Organist:</i>	Hubert	Joy	
Evening			NEWS/ANNOUNCEMENTS
<i>Chairman:</i>	Pr Mark Chen	Jonathan Kim	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcome: We would like to welcome back Rev Yeo Seow Phong, our speaker for this Lord's Day, to New Life London. Pastor Yeo will be ministering to us until the end of December. • Pray for Journey Mercies: Daniel, Maureen, Anthony & Helen (M'sia & S'pore), Mok & Carol (Israel/S'pore), Douglas (Ghana), John & Sharon (Iceland), Joey Seow (S'pore). • Pray for the students who are away: Sophia & Grace (S'pore), Rachel (China – on a 1 year exchange), Nicholas (Belgium). • Pray for the children who beginning their new school term: Abel, Christiana, Miranda and Joshua Seow. • Pray for those who are sick: Douglas (knee pain), Maria (ankle and joint pain), Constance (shoulder pain), Josh's grandma (stroke), Hannah's grandma (hospitalised), Kadix (general health). • Pray for those who are seeking employment: John, Hubert, Hannah
<i>Preacher:</i>	Rev Yeo Seow Phong	Rev Yeo Seow Phong	
<i>Message:</i>	Liberating Promises	Confirming Your Election	
<i>Text:</i>	2 Peter 1:1-4	2 Peter 1:5-11	
<i>Pianist:</i>	Joy	Hubert	
Other Duties			
	<i>Today: 07/09/2008</i>	<i>Next Week: 14/09/2008</i>	
<i>Ushers</i>	Josiah / Yetta	Jonathan / Evelyn	
<i>Sunday Sch:</i>	Hui Min	Hui Min	
<i>Lunch:</i>	Constance	Constance	
<i>Washing-up:</i>	Volunteers	Volunteers	
<i>Bible Study:</i>	No Bible Study	No Bible Study	
Appointments of the Week			
Fri 12 Sep	7.30pm	Young Adults Fellowship: Led by Pr Mark Chen	
Sat 13 Sep	4.00pm	Prayer Meeting & Bible Study: Led by Pr Mark Chen	
<u>Last Week's Worship Service Collections</u>			
Offering: £448.50		Lunch: £36.60	
<u>Memory Verse</u>			
<i>Last Week (August 08 Wk 5): Psalm 139:18</i>			
If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand: when I awake, I am still with thee.			
<i>This Week (September 08 Wk 1): Psalm 139:19</i>			
Surely thou wilt slay the wicked, O God: depart from me therefore, ye bloody men.			