

Intro: "Barack Obama has a good Al Gore story. Sometime after the 2000 election, Obama called on a corporate executive in a big office with a terrific view of midtown Manhattan. The businessman had been an ardent Gore supporter, and the former vice president had recently asked him to consider investing in a startup television venture. "It was strange," the executive told Obama. "Here he was, a former vice president, a man who had just a few months earlier been on the verge of being the most powerful man on the planet. During the campaign, I would take his calls any time of day, would rearrange my schedule whenever he wanted to meet. But suddenly, after the election, when he walked in, I couldn't help feeling that the meeting was a chore. I hate to admit it, because I really like the guy. But at some level he wasn't Al Gore, former vice president. He was just one of the hundred guys a day who are coming to me looking for money. It made me realize what a big steep cliff you guys are on." -Jon Meacham, *Newsweek*, Jan. 5, 2009

Meacham goes on to write later, that "[power] it is best understood in terms of command and control. It is either the capacity to make others do as you wish (the command function) or to reorder the environment around you (the control function)."

The world views power as important because it enables you to do just these two things: command and control to your will. Particularly, it is the command and control for our own personal success. As leaders, those who have influence over somebody else, we are called to a different view of power as Christians. We are not called to command and control others for our own personal success, trying to bend people to our will, but rather we are called to use our power to benefit others and lead them to treasure Jesus.

In this manner, when our hearts and lives line up with the gospel, we are able to let go of command to a great Commander, and to give up our power of control to the only One capable of handling it. This is simply...faith. It is that utter dependence upon Jesus alone as our sole Savior and Master, and as His life-giving death and resurrection as our sufficient and complete fulfillment for our souls, so that we don't *need* the affirmation and respect of other people. Then, the goals of our "personal success" drastically change to one goal: treasure Christ and see Him treasured by others. All else is folly.

As we understand our union and righteousness in Christ alone, we are able to serve our servants even when unappreciated, to love instead of threaten, and to rest rather than worry and fret over losses that are not planned. How do we do this? How do we let our success go? We believe in the full sufficiency of Jesus' blood and righteousness as our salvation and we passionately desire to know Him and the power of His resurrection more than personal success. I guess the question of leadership for the Christian is not "how to win friends and influence people" but rather, "how to know Christ and the power of His resurrection." If our hearts' desire is to know Christ and resemble Him more, then how we treat those under our influence should be drastically different than the world. Paul gives us a clue about how it looks to lead in light of the gospel of Christ.

1. The Gospel Leads Us to a Different View of Power

- i. Masters are to treat their slaves in the same way as their slaves are to treat them
 - a. Goodwill, integrity, desiring their best
 1. Work to benefit your slaves? Yes!
 2. Work *hard* to benefit your slaves!
 - b. Does this mean that Masters should *obey* Slaves? No, but they should honor them as to Christ.
 1. There are still lines of authority within the workplace, but those in authority are called to use their power for the benefit of their employees.
 2. Be honest and rule with integrity and honor for those whom you rule.
- ii. NOT threatening
 - a. ultimatum of wrath
 - b. Acts 4:29; 9:1

1. Threat to destroy or harm
2. Couples with “murder” in Acts 9:1 (said of Paul, BTW)
- c. This does not mean that there are no consequences
- iii. Jesus is not a “respector of certain types of persons”
 - a. He doesn't judge by outward appearance and/or role in this case
 1. The world uses power to gain their own benefit
 2. God has used His power to gain us benefit
 - b. The gospel shows us that we are all in need of a Savior and share the same Master
- iv. Christians are called to a different kind of power
 - a. Why do we threaten? Why do we treat those under us with dishonor?
 1. We want *our* honor, respect, and personal success
 2. If somebody gets in our way, we threaten to destroy them
 3. We believe that we are *more important than* others, particularly because of *our* power and strength
 - a. Economically
 - b. Politically
 - c. Socially
 - b. God is the Judge of all, there is none righteous or wise enough to be acceptable to God without the blood of Jesus

2. What Do We Do With Our Influence?

- i. We use our influence for the glory of Christ and the welfare of others
 - a. The gospel of Jesus Christ shows us that we are not saved due to our power or our perfection or due to our personal success
 1. We are saved solely by faith in Jesus Christ, through the grace of God, in the death of Jesus in our place
 2. It is the cross of Christ which bids us to consider everything else as a loss in comparison
 - a. Success
 - b. Respect
 - c. Self-righteousness
 - b. Therefore, what power and influence that we do have in this world, we do not need to defend, protect, or hoard. We can give it away for the sake of others, not to gain benefit to ourselves.
- ii. We share power with groups that have been neglected or treated unjustly b/c of the gospel
 - a. In the gospel neither Jew nor Gentile mean anything, but only faith in Jesus Christ
 - b. We throw down the culture's natural forms of power and share decision-making and leadership power with those who have been cast to the fringe of society
 1. No racism
 2. No castes
 3. No economic superiority
- iii. We serve others whom we lead
 - a. Luke 22:25-27
 - b. Mark 10:45

3. How Do We Do This?

- i. Humble yourselves
 - a. See Jesus and His humble bearing up of the cross for us sinners.
 1. Phil 2:5ff
 - b. Your sins were so egregious that Jesus had to die to save you from God's wrath toward you.
 - c. God loves you so deeply that Jesus was glad to die for you!

1. Every blessing, every good thing, that you think your “power” and your “rights” will bring you are empty promises. All that you need has already been given to you in Christ. Can you trust Him enough to risk being taken advantage of?
- ii. **KEEP YOUR EYES ON JESUS**
- a. The Holy Spirit is revealing Christ *to our hearts* at all times. Jesus shows us how to rule with love because He gave Himself for His rebel-slaves (Romans 5:8-11)
 - b. Though the world treated him unjustly, He submitted His mastery to it for the sake of the glory of God and the salvation of your soul. He loves you that much!!
 - c. He served us! (John 13:5-16)
- iii. We count all things loss for the sake of knowing Christ (Philippians 3:7-11)
- a. To *know* Jesus
 1. Christianity is not merely reason and assent, but it is also the subjective knowledge of Jesus, the present relationship with the living Savior
 2. Our desire to know Him must overwhelm our desire for personal success
 - a. Like Aron Ralston who cut his arm off in Utah to save himself from death, we desire Christ more than we desire the use of our powers
 - b. Love for Christ makes nothing too hard. Love doesn’t speak of self-sacrifice, for it is no considerable cost to serve the one whom you love. Their joy is your delight.
 - i. John 13:1 – “...having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end.”
 3. To merely live with the principles of faith, but not in the presence of Christ, is have a form of godliness but to deny its power
 - a. What do we do with fear and worry? Take it to Jesus because He cares for us (1 Peter 5:7)
 - b. What do we do with anger and bitterness? Forgive our debtors because He has forgiven us through His blood (Ephesians 4:32), praying for His Spirit to empower us to forgive (see following Ephesians passage: 6:10ff)
 - c. What do we do with financial decisions? Look to Jesus and see the world through His values, promises, and instructions with prayer.
 - b. As we orient our lives exclusively around Jesus, our goals shift from personal success to the glory of Christ and the welfare of others.

Conclusion: How we use our power in our everyday lives, extending influence over those who are led and ruled by our authority, is a very pertinent and practical question. The power of the world will be exercised and then will fade away, gone in an instant until only the names of the powerful remain. In this the man of the world seeks to use whatever power he has in order to control how his story is told. For the Christian, the question is simply this: Whose story is the most important for your power to tell? Masters, you do well to remember that this life is not your story to tell, and in the end it will be but a chapter in the glorious story of Christ. So, write your chapter well, by obediently trusting the Author of the story and do all within your power to treasure Christ and lead others to find their joy in Jesus.