

The Power of Love 9:9-10

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Power!

1. Living in California, we hear a lot about *power* these days.
2. Due to some rather complicated factors involving regulation, de-regulation, pressure from environmentalists, and supply and demand – we're told there's a power shortage.
3. *Rolling blackouts* have been threatened as the power companies try to ensure there'll be enough *affordable* power to go around for all.
4. State and local governments are in a mad scramble to come up with new power sources
5. And the mounting debt being accumulated each day is threatening the economic health, not only of our own State but of the Nation.
6. Most businesses have instituted some kind of power saving strategy, not just to conserve energy but to curb their power bill.
7. Ads suggesting we all "Flex Our Power" by "killing a watt" and shutting off lights have blitzed the TV and radio.
8. Power – it's a big deal right now and it threatens to become an even bigger issue if a solution isn't found soon.

B. The Church

1. The *entire Nation* faced an energy crisis in 1977.
2. Like many civil officials, the governor of Virginia developed an action plan for conservation.
3. He proposed that energy use be restricted in non-essential buildings.
4. At the top of his list of "non-essential" buildings was – you guessed it – Churches!
5. No one protested because in the eyes of the world, as well as many church-goers themselves, the church is only a building, and an expensive, under-used one at that.
6. Except for a few hours on Sunday morning and an occasional poorly attended mid-week service, the building sits empty.
7. So why waste scarce resources on it?
8. In the minds of many, the Christian Church has lost its *relevance*.

- a. it now sits alongside the Rotary, the Elks, and the Lodge as just one more *social club*
 - b. instead of being a *movement*, it's become a *monument*
 - c. instead of a living *organism*, it's petrified into an *organization*.
9. The main reason why the Church seems to be largely irrelevant today is because it's traded in it's *God-given* means for the *world's* way of doing things.
- a. we've exchanged the *Power of Love* for *lesser* powers
 - b. we've been *seduced* by the world's display of power and tried to embrace it
 - c. and by doing so, we've lost the one thing that makes the Church distinct from the world -
 - d. our power-source.
10. All of this is amply demonstrated in our text this morning

II. TEXT

A. V. 9

9 “Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you; He is just and having salvation, Lowly and riding on a donkey, A colt, the foal of a donkey.

1. As we saw in our study last Wednesday, this verse lies in the context of the foretelling of God's deliverance of Israel from all her enemies.
2. The nations which had oppressed her for generations are listed and their fate described.
3. But in the midst of these pictures of impending judgment, the prophet Zechariah gives quick flashes out into the future of the Coming Messiah.
4. V. 9 is one of these – like a camera's flashbulb that goes off in a darkened room, we get a brief glimpse and are left with little more than the image it burned on our retina.
5. While Israel's enemies will be judged – Israel will enjoy her redemption at the coming of her King and Deliverer.
6. This is clearly a prophecy of the Triumphal entry on Palm Sunday.
7. All the people recognized that Jesus was fulfilling this word from Zechariah and that's why they began shouting the words of the

Messianic Psalm

- a. “Hosanna” which means “Save Now!”
 - b. They fully expected Him as the Messiah to rise as their political and military leader and expel the hated Romans.
8. *Jesus* knew full well that He was fulfilling this prophecy;
- a. that’s why he sent 2 of His disciples to go get the colt and bring it to Him as He waited just over the summit of the Mt. of Olives.
 - b. then, climbing up on it, he started down the trail that led to the eastern gate of Jerusalem
 - c. being one week before Passover, the side of the Mt. of Olives was covered with people who were camping there, getting ready to observe the festival.
 - d. when word spread that Jesus of Nazareth was coming, riding on a donkey, they immediately realized the significance of what was happening and how it fulfilled prophecy, and they quickly gathered branches from the trees and took off their cloaks to lay on the trail as a kind of royal pavement for their Coming King.
9. But if we go back to the original prophecy as it was given by Zechariah and do not let ourselves think about it’s fulfillment in the Triumphal Entry on Palm Sunday we realize the prophet said something *unexpected*.
10. Look at it again . . .

“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you; He is just and having salvation, Lowly and riding on a donkey, A colt, the foal of a donkey.”

11. Something’s wrong with this picture – what’s that the Messiah is riding when He comes in victory, bringing redemption? A young donkey!
12. Now, what kind of steed would we EXPECT the victorious King to be riding?
13. Once more, listen to how Zechariah sets it up . . .

“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you; He is just and having salvation,”

14. He’s a victorious, conquering King – so what we expect is a

warhorse – a white charger, rearing up on it's hind legs, pawing the air and snorting!

15. That's what we *expect* – but it's *not* what we find.

B. A Bike

1. Try to picture this - It's the end of the Gulf War and word reaches the capital of Kuwait that General Norman Schwarzkopf will soon arrive at the capital building to meet with the Kuwaiti leaders.
2. Word quickly spreads throughout Kuwait City and the grateful people rush out in to the streets to welcome the American hero who has liberated their country.
3. There's shouting and rejoicing all over and then the motorcade arrives.
 - a. it begins with a few well armed jeeps,
 - b. these are followed by some heavily armored personnel carriers packed with soldiers.
 - c. then some Abrams M-1 tanks roll by - a couple of F-16's fly overhead
5. And finally – here comes General Schwarzkopf – riding one of those scooters the kids ride these days.
6. Get that image – because it's the paradox presented here.

C. A Revelation

1. V. 9 has something incredibly profound to teach us about the nature of God.
2. God is forewarning the people that when the Messiah comes, though He is indeed the rightful King, His Kingdom is *not of this world* and its means are not to be confused with the way the kingdoms of this world operate.
3. God does not use *force* to accomplish His agenda.
4. He works thru the power of *love* and *truth* and these are revealed in *humility*, not force.
5. God could use force, because as Creator, He is the Author of all power.
6. But it's contrary to His very nature to use force to move people to faith.
7. The use of force is an attempt to move another person against their *will* – it's an attempt to do an end-run around *choice*.

8. Now – think about it – God is the One who *created us with a free-will*, with the ability to chose.
 - a. this is one of the prime things that makes human beings different from the animals,
 - b. we aren't driven by mere physical desires or inbred instincts
 - c. we have the ability to make free-will choices.
9. For God to give us free-will, and then use *force* to coerce us to do what He wants, would be to negate His own creative genius.
10. So God DOESN'T use the power of force – in *any* form – to move us.
11. The power He applies is the power of love and truth.
 - a. He speaks by His Spirit through His Word
 - b. and tells us of His great love for us – a love that was perfectly revealed in the Cross of Christ
12. While God does not use force on us – that's what the devil is all about.
 - a. he's all in to force and coercion
 - b. whether it's fear or guilt
 - c. addiction, deception, all of these are one form or another of force
 - d. and they are the tools, the shackles and chains, if your will, of Satan's attempt to enslave the human race and make them do his bidding.

D. As We Live

1. One of the most important spiritual truths we must learn is that when you break it down, life is lived out of one of two basic motivations –
 - a. *force* or *love*;
 - b. and these two are contrary to one another.
2. Force negates love, and genuine love never resorts to the use of force.
3. Let me use an example:
 - a. if I genuinely love my wife, then I want what is best for her, regardless of what I get in return
 - b. that's what the Biblical word "agape" means
 - c. that love will move me, not to assert myself or my own desires, but what is best for her

- d. that means that even though I know I am called by God to be the leader and head in our marriage, in the living out of that headship, I will *humbly* and consistently *serve* her.
 - e. I will spend far less time thinking about all the ways *she* could be a better wife and instead invest that in how I can be a better husband.
 - f. but if I threaten her, or arrange conversations and manipulate situations in order to get her to do something – guess what – that’s not love – that’s force.
 - g. my anger hurled at her in hurtful words, or my cold silence that shuts her out while I pout, these are all subtle forms of force – not love.
4. Love, as Paul says in 1 Cor. 13 is *humble* and takes the attitude of a servant.
 5. And in the final analysis, the Power of Love does far more than the Power of Force ever could.
 6. Look at the History of the Church and notice when it has been *most* powerful and most effective for the Kingdom of God;
 - a. not when it was in control, not when it setup kings and princes and drew lines around nations.
 - b. the Church was most effective when it was despised by the world and rejected,
 - c. when because it was stripped of worldly power all it had to rely on was the Power of Truth and Love and as a result, turned the world upside down.
 - d. it’s when being a Christian meant arrest and execution that the Church grew most rapidly
 - e. why? Because men and women realized the Christians had discovered a power source for living that made the things of this world pale in comparison.
 - f. when the Church has quietly loved and served one another and reached out in humility to a hostile world that it has been most honored and esteemed.
 - 1) though the skeptics mock our faith –
 - 2) they still commend our uncompromising love and commitment to truth.
 7. Today, some segments of the Church are making an historic mistake.

- a. they are forsaking the means of ministry and life God has ordained for His people
 - b. and they have embraced the world's means
 - c. but the world's means are just subtle uses of force
8. God has given us a *message* – but we've turned to *marketing*.
9. God wants us to redeem this world one soul at a time – but many today are trying to rescue the world through *political action groups*.
10. If we would see genuine, righteous change, then we need to renounce the ways of the world and follow the example of Jesus.
11. Humility isn't something that marked just the end of His life – it was the defining trait of His entire life.
- a. though He is called Emmanuel – God With Us – He came in to this world as a vulnerable newborn infant
 - b. his first crib was a feeding trough
 - c. his parents were poor and he lived in a town with a bad reputation
 - d. he grew up under a cloud of doubt over *who* his father really was
 - e. because he was never accepted by the religious elites of his day, He lived the life of a traveling rabbi whose fortunes seemed to rise and fall as he taught things that were both accepted and considered too harsh
 - f. the majority of His miracles were performed on the downtrodden and outcast
 - g. in a defining moment with His disciples, He donned the garb of the lowest servant and washed their dirty feet
 - h. when the mob came to take Him in the Garden, He diverted their attention off the disciples on to Himself.
 - i. and then, in history's consummate act of humility – Jesus, the Judge of the Universe, stood before a couple of conniving, corrupt human judges and remained silent as they unjustly condemned Him to death.
 - 1) the soldiers roughly abused Him
 - 2) and then hauled Him out to the scene of execution --
 - 3) where they stripped Him and fixed his hands and feet to a wooden cross in one of the most shameful and embarrassing forms of death every devised.

- j. and the entire time – not one threat, not one taunt, not one proud or haughty word escaped His lips!
- 12. Why? Because of love – because of the power of God’s love for those who performed the deed and for you and I as we’re gathered here today.
- 13. In the cross we see the epitome of the Power of Love and the Power of Force at an intersection - for the Cross was the supreme expression of the hatred of man.
- 14. Indeed, the cross was the focal point of all the hatred and force of Satan himself.
- 15. So tell me – which is greater? Who’s power overcame at Calvary?
- 16. The Power of Love, demonstrated at the Cross is as strong and real today as it was the moment the first drop of blood fell.
 - a. and that love *continues* to change millions of lives
 - b. instead of forcing us – by love and truth God moves us by giving us an *internal* motivation.
 - c. without violating our will, He moves us by loving us to *want* to follow Him and do what is right

III. CONCLUSION

A. Yeah – But What About Later?

- 1. Someone might say, “Okay Lance, I hear what you’re saying and that’s true about Christ’s *first* coming; He was humble and meek then. But when He comes again, He will come in glory that every eye will see and with flaming vengeance. In Revelation Jesus is seen with a sword coming out of His mouth – that’s sounds an awful like the use of force.”
- 2. Well, look at the very next verse in Zech. 9 . . .

B. V. 10

10 I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim And the horse from Jerusalem; The battle bow shall be cut off. He shall speak peace to the nations; His dominion *shall be* ‘from sea to sea, And from the River to the ends of the earth.’

- 1. As in v. 9, the first part of the verse set us up for one thing, but the

- last half of it surprises us with something *unexpected*.
2. The first part of the verse makes it look as if when Christ comes again, He will end war by going to war
 3. But then we read, “He shall speake peace to the nations.”
 4. When Jesus comes again, He won’t do battle, swinging some kind of broadsword, bashing in heads and lopping off limbs.
 5. The sword He uses is His *spoken word* – His authority, His power is so radically DIFFERENT from the power of this world that all He has to do is SPEAK –
 - a. and His Will is done!
 - b. He spoke and the universe leapt into existence!
 6. At the end of history, He speaks one word – “PEACE!” and guess what – there’s Peace from one end of earth to the other.
 - a. the chariot breaks; the horse halts, and the bowstring shreds
 - b. or to put it in modern terms: the tank stops, the planes can’t get off the ground, and all the guns jam

C. Being His People

- 1 Being the followers of Christ means that we live by the pattern of life He’s shown.
2. He lived by the power of love and truth.
3. And though He was the Lord of Glory and possessed all power and the absolute right to use it, humility marked every thought and action.
4. Think of it, even in His contest with the devil in the wilderness – when Satan tried to side-track Him and get Him to use sheer power to accomplish His God given plan, Jesus refused and chose the path of love and humility.
5. If are to follow Him, to be his disciples, then we too must renounce the use of force, and embrace the path of humble love.
6. Think about that now as we leave and go to our homes, or to the store; as we wake tomorrow and go to work or school.
7. In your treatment of others – is it humble love, or the subtle use of force to get them to do what you want them to?