

Jubilee Church - 'Vision Expressed'  
**The Power of the Holy Spirit**

Notes from talk by Mike Gilson 30 Sep 2018

**Power** - one of the ways to distinguish Christianity from other religions.

Power:

- 'Jesus, full of the Spirit...' (Luke 4:1) after his baptism
- 'Jesus, in the power of the Spirit...' (Luke 4:14) after his temptation
- 'The kingdom is not a matter of words but of power.' (1 Corinthians 4:20)
- Jesus felt (healing) power go out of him when he was simply touched by a woman who'd been ill for many years (Luke 8:46)
- 'living waters welling up in you' (John 4:14)
- 'you will receive power from on high when the Holy Spirit falls on you' (Acts 1:8)
- 'you will do even greater things' than those that Jesus did when the Spirit comes (John 14:12)

With the Spirit's power working through us we can do what Jesus commanded his disciples to do: 'preach the good news, heal the sick, and proclaim the kingdom'. Preaching and healing...

We are also told in Micah 6:8, 'But he's already made it plain how to live, what to do, what God is looking for in men and women. It's quite simple: Do what is fair and just to your neighbour, be compassionate and loyal in your love. And don't take yourself too seriously - take God seriously.' We're called to love justice and mercy, and one another, and strangers...

This year we have been focussing on these things in 3 of the 4 strands of our Vision for the next couple of years:

- 'Come as you are'
- 'Mercy and justice'
- 'Spiritual community'

The 4th strand of the vision - 'full of the Spirit' - seeks God's power to put these into action.

But it is possible to resist the Spirit (Acts 7:50), quench him (1 Thessalonians 5:19) and grieve him, so that he withdraws (Ephesians 4:20). We don't want to do that.

Jesus says the Spirit will well up in us and overflow to give life to others. But if we resist, quench or grieve him, it's like we have a blockage in the stream of our flow that dams the power and life of the Spirit in us, and prevents us 'doing the stuff' God has prepared for us.

Simon Holley's book 'Sustainable Power', one of the 4 recommended books that support our vision this year, tells the tale of a church that confronted and dealt with some of the biggest of the blockages as they worked to free themselves to 'overflow with the Spirit' to build up God's kingdom in their local area. Simon likened the blockages to rocks, that sit in the stream of our lives preventing the flow of the Spirit.

Today we've looked at 5 of the biggies that Simon describes, to help diagnose our situation and the areas we need to seek God's help to free us to be open channels for the Spirit. In the coming months we will look at these in more detail, seeking to deal with the rocks we see affecting each of us. At the same time, we'll be working on the way we do things at Jubilee, aiming to remove organisational and cultural blockages too. The 5 rocks we've looked at today are:

### **Rock No 1 - Self Reliance**

Some people who feel alone in the world, not believing God is the good father he says he is, can seek security in their competence - their ability to do things. That tendency has been called 'the orphan heart'. Symptoms of it include believing that God: loves conditionally based on performance; communicates poorly or only when he wants us to do something; delights in control and manipulates purely for his own ends; sets unreasonable standards and is harsh and critical when we miss them; is fickle and unreliable and fulfils his word when he feels like it; is cold, aloof and unable to display affection; is unforgiving and merciless; is stingy and holds out on his children.

## Rock No 2 - Fear

Fear: of others (Matt 10:26); of death (Matt 10:28); that God won't act (Mark 5:36); that God won't provide (Luke 12:32); rejection, failure and poverty (2 Timothy 3).

In Jerusalem in the early days of the church, Peter encouraged the believers to stand firm with prayer, in Acts 4:9-31: "Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness. Stretch out your hand to heal and perform signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus." After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.'

## Rock No 3 - a Judging heart

A hard, judging heart blocks the flow of love and Spirit. It usurps God! And brings the same judgement on the person who judges (Matthew 7:2). It is right to discern something that is out of order, but wrong to judge someone for it. The first is a righteous thing. The second involves feelings of superiority. How can we offer help and healing to someone we are judging and holding at arms length by doing so, someone we are looking at with 'haughty eyes' (Proverbs 6:17).

The pharisees judged the woman caught in adultery and wanted to punish her. Jesus told her to mend her ways, to repent, and he didn't condemn her (John 8).

It is a heart thing. We don't need to agree on everything, but if we're to be a 'come as you are' church we need to accept everyone without judging them. Will we be going soft on sin? No - people will want to stick around and will be there to hear the truth.

## Rock No 4 - a Controlling heart

Jesus's biggest opposition was the pharisees. He called them 'whitewashed tombs' - looking pretty but rotten inside (read through Matthew 23 - wow!). Even the disciples tried to control him (eg Peter in Matthew 16:22 etc). We do the same - trying to get our way with our agendas, our opinions on worship, spiritual manifestations, expectations of leaders, and how easily we are offended by things we think are wrong. A 'religious, controlling spirit' is the No 1 thing that resists the Spirit according to Simon Holley.

## Rock No 5 - Unbelief

Jesus was only able to do a few miracles in his home town because of their lack of faith. They found it hard to take this young man who they knew as the carpenter's son seriously (Matthew 13:58).

The affects of unbelief: it breaks us off from God's plan for us (Romans 11:20); it stops us from fully entering the rest of God (Hebrews 3:18-19); it acts as a spiritual poison (Acts 14:2); it defiles the conscience (Titus 1:15); it can affect the whole region (Mark 6:5); its limits the power of God not only over our own life but also over the lives of those we love (Mark 9:19).

3 areas the enemy uses particularly: our source (revelation of who God is); our identity as his children; and our purpose (an understanding of what we can do by the Spirit).

Tests for unbelief:

- I find myself disappointed and let down by God when he doesn't seem to work or answer my prayers as I believe he should;
- when I hear of others' experiences of God's presence and power, my default response is 'cynical' and I often try to analyse, minimise or disprove the claim;
- others call me critical, but I feel that they are naive and I am discerning;
- I first perceive situations as 'impossible' rather than 'possible with God';
- prayer is usually a last resort for me;
- I doubt that God speaks to others as they claim, because he doesn't speak to me in that way;
- I'm reluctant to receive prayer, because it hasn't worked before;
- I think my situation, my sins, my fears and my \_\_\_\_\_ (fill in the blank) will never change;
- I have a tendency to worry, and have anxiety and fear about many things;
- I often control people and situations, because I'm afraid to let go and trust God even when I know I should.

It is possible to believe (in Jesus) and disbelieve (in his ability to do what he so clearly can do) at the same time (like the father in Mark 9:24). But if we have revelation of truth from the bible, that, together with our weak belief, can be transformed by the Spirit to great power (Ephesians 1:16-19).

(Principal sources - The bible! and 'Sustainable Power' by Simon Holley)