

There seems to be a power shortage in our nation these days. People feel powerless. Some feel powerless to find a job or if they have a job powerless to make enough money. Those who have money feel powerless to protect their money. It seems no investment is safe anymore. Powerful politicians are powerless to reach consensus on significant issues. We feel powerless over the weather, the economy, the government, the behavior of our children, we even feel powerless over the performance of Tony Romo.

Then we read the Bible and there is so much power going on; the power of creation, the power of old man Abraham producing a child, the power of God parting the Red Sea, the power of Samson and Gideon and Elijah. When we read the Gospels we are amazed by the power of Jesus healing the sick and raising the dead. You would expect power from the Son of God but the amazing thing is that when you reach the book of Acts the power of God is displayed by ordinary people. The Bible is a powerful book with a powerful message but here is a question that bothers many: *Why don't we see that kind of power today?* Why don't we see people being healed, I mean really healed? Why don't we see the miraculous power of God? I know, I hear stories, but to be honest I don't see the kinds of things I read about in this book. So why no power today? Here is my simple answer - I don't know. But I want to share with you a few things I DO know.

God's power is still available. The Holy Spirit is our source of power and when you are full of the Holy Spirit you are full of power. The Spirit-filled life is a power-full life. Let's see if we can get a little power boost this morning by opening our hearts to the power of the Holy Spirit.

God's power comes in different forms. When we think about the power of God we almost always think about a power that is visible and impressive like thunder and lightning or a tornado or a hurricane. We rarely think about the quiet and unseen variety of God's power. Take this gas can for instance... There is power in this container. I can set a match to it and you will see an impressive display of explosive power. Or I can pour this gas into the gas tank on a car and it can flow through a fuel line to a carburetor where it is sprayed out and sparked in a contained space called a cylinder forcing pistons up and down conveying energy to wheels that carry a three ton hunk of metal (and plastic) down the road 300 miles. Power comes in different forms.

I spoke to a man this week who was born with a learning disability that few people knew about. Later in life he was afflicted with a physical disability that everyone knows about because it is impossible to hide. Yet, in spite of his disabilities, he has become the CEO of one of the largest corporations in America. Which is more powerful, God's healing of his disabilities or his faith and persistence despite his lack of healing? We have a grief class that begins today led by a couple who lost a son in the prime of his life. They would love to have seen the power of God preventing him from his tragic death but God has chosen to demonstrate His power through their ministry to others who have lost loved ones. God's power comes in many different forms.

God's power is given for God's purpose. From the very beginning of the book of Acts God's power is given to the early church to bear witness to the world concerning Jesus Christ.

Let's read Acts 1:1-12. Acts 1:8 says, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth." Notice that the promise, "you will receive power," is married to the command, "and you shall be My witnesses." What God has joined together, do not separate. If I have no intention of being His witness then how can I expect to receive His power?

Unfortunately the word "witness" has become associated with words. To witness is to tell someone how they can be saved. But that definition is reductionistic. Witnessing is proclaiming the Good News of the Gospel. But it is not just telling. It is also showing. You see both of these aspects of witnessing in Acts 4:31... The believers in Jerusalem were filled with the Holy Spirit and it says, "They began to speak the word of God with boldness." But notice what happens next... vv. 32-35. The fullness of the Spirit didn't just impact their words but the power of God worked its way into their wallets and purses and they were suddenly struck with a severe case of generosity. In our culture talk is cheap. I have said it several times lately and let me say it again. This world does not sit up and take notice because we believe something. To bear witness to this world requires that we believe the Gospel enough to do something about it. That is why Paul said to the Corinthians, "My message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith would not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God." **1 Corinthians 2:4-5**. The power of the Holy Spirit confirms the truth of our message. God's Spirit is freely given to accomplish His purpose by being effective witnesses to the world by the power of God.

God's power is delivered through transformers. Have you ever witnessed God's raw power? I once saw a bolt of lightning hit a tree during a storm. The word "awesome" should be reserved for times like that. Lightning can have 100 million to a billion volts of electricity. Just to give you a reference point a Taser has around 50,000 volts which is reduced to about 5,000 volts when it is actually tasing someone. The point is we can't handle the power of God. God graciously "steps down" His power to be useful. It's a little like a transformer, that gray, metal, barrel-looking thing on the power pole outside your house. That electrical device "steps down" the voltage that pulses through transmission lines all over the city. Typical transmission lines have over 750,000 volts coursing through them. Your house can't handle that. The transformer "steps down" the voltage into a few thousand volts that can be used by the utilities in your house. God "steps down" His power in our lives so that we will be useful for His purposes.

Jesus Christ is the ultimate transformer. The Bible says He, "existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, *and* being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." **Philippians 2:6-11**

Like Jesus, we are called to be God's transformers. He provides power to us in ways that are useful to us and to the people in our lives who need to be transformed by the power of God.

God's power is showcased through suffering. The persistent theme throughout the story of God's activity on earth is how He uses the weak things, broken things, imperfect things to accomplish His perfect will. **2 Corinthians 12:7-10** recounts Paul's experience after he had received a vision of heaven. "Because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me-- to keep me from exalting myself! Concerning this I implored the Lord three times that it might leave me. And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong."

God's power is demonstrated most clearly when suffering exposes our weaknesses. Anyone here feel weak today? Congratulations, you have just been pre-qualified to receive the power of God. Think about that; while we are moaning and complaining because our lives have not worked out the way we wanted them to, while we are desperately seeking to become more and more powerful, God looks at our weak and broken conditions and says, "Perfect, you are just what I need to showcase my power." I cannot forget the words of Hudson Taylor, the founder of the China inland missions, when a friend commented on the impact he was having in China. Taylor said, "It seemed to me that God looked over the whole world to find a man who was weak enough to do His work. And when He at last found me, He said, 'He's weak enough. He'll do.'" He went on, "All of God's giants have been weak men who did great things for God because they reckoned on His being with them." So how do I get this power?

God's power is obtained and maintained through prayer. God grants power to those who are humble enough to recognize their need for God. Andrew Murray said that humility is, "the displacement of self by the enthronement of God. Where God is all, self is nothing." (*Replenish*, p. 47). Prayer is the means by which I get "plugged in" to God's power. But here is the problem; we often lack capacity for the power of God because we have our lives plugged in to so many other activities that prevent us from being plugged in to God. Look at this post...there are plenty of electrical outlets but they are all used up. Here is an oxygen bottle. For some, oxygen is a matter of life or death. There is plenty of power to operate this but no place to plug it in.

God has limitless power. If we are not experiencing the power of God the problem is not on the supply side. The problem is diminished capacity on our end. We have plugged our lives into trivial things, like money and sex and ambition and entertainment. Let's take a moment and unplug some things so that we can be filled with the power of God.

Invitation...