
We are going to continue with Paul's prayer to the saints in Ephesians 1.

Ephesians 1:19-23

I pray that you will understand what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all. (ESV)

Just so you know, the first part of this passage which I italicized is not in the original text but I included it for clarity sake since the rest of the line is to be understood as a continuation of the statement in **verse 17-8** (remember this is one long sentence) where Paul says that he prays that our glorious Father would give us spiritual wisdom and insight (or revelation) and that our hearts will be flooded with light, so we might grow 1) in our knowledge of God, 2) understand the confident hope He has given us, and 3) understand or know **perfectly** the incredible greatness of God's power for us who believe.

As we studied last week, the "knowledge of God" is all about knowing and experiencing God personally, intimately, and tangibly. This is far different than just knowing about God and about the things of God. We are to know and experience God as our Father, Jesus as our Lover, and the Holy Spirit as our

Counselor/Comforter; likewise, we are to perfectly know the mega-power which has been bestowed upon us who believe.

Therefore, in the same way that knowing God is far beyond a casual observance, ritualistic participation, or even a detailed study of, and adherence to, Biblical truths, knowing the power unleashed towards us is to be something we experience personally, intimately, and tangibly in every aspect of our being such that others, if asked, could testify to God's existence because of how He has made Himself manifest in our lives.

This word "power" ("*dunamis*") is literally a spiritual dynamic force and it's where we get our word dynamite. Paul then adds a further description of this power using 3 entirely different Greek words when he says this is the same mighty power which raised Christ from the dead. Sometimes when we read words like power and might we treat them as metaphors because they don't describe our day-in-and-day-out experience. But our lack of experience does not make it a metaphor; it just means we do not yet know or understand this power.

Paul says that this power which is unleashed toward us is according to the working ("*energeian*") or energetic power (where we get our word energy), of the might ("*kratous*"), or the dominate power that overcomes any obstacle, of His power ("*ischyos*") or forcefulness. In other words, God's power toward us is always active, it is invincible, indomitable and therefore beyond what any of us have yet to imagine. This is the power that God wants us to daily experience.

Paul then gives us examples of how that power was manifested toward Christ as a way for us to understand how it is manifested toward us.

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- First, it was the power that raised Christ from the dead and literally animated dead tissue and transformed Jesus' fleshly body into a supernatural body. A body which had shape, substance, could touch and be touched, could eat, and yet walk through cave walls and even suddenly appear in the midst of a room where all the doors were locked.
 - Second, it was the power that seated Jesus in the place of honor at God's right hand in the heavenly realms. After Jesus rose from the dead, He still walked amongst humanity. But one day everyone saw Him rise into the sky where God took Him into the heavens and sat Him at the seat of power. Culturally, the notion of the right hand or right arm refers to strength, power, and authority (since for most people that is their strongest arm). Further, the fact that Jesus is seated means that there is no challenge or threat to His authority, He is firmly planted.
 - Third, it is the power that placed Jesus far above any ruler or authority or power or leader or anything else—not only in this world but also in the world to come. Who can legitimately shake their fists at Jesus? Can puny mankind? Can the demons? Can Satan? Can any of the other angelic beings? Can anything at all stake a claim that they can be like God? Satan sure tried and well let's just say that his end, and all those who believe his lie that they can be like God, is not pretty. Jesus is above all! No one is greater than our Lord!
 - Fourth, it is the power that has put all things under the authority of Christ. Not only is He the supreme authority, no one can circumvent His will (***Ephesians 1:5, 11***). We are told that every world leader and every

national power rises and falls by His power alone (*Psalm 2, Daniel 4:35; 9:24*). Even Satan is submitted to His rule and authority (*Job 1-2; Daniel 9:25; Revelation 20:10*). He has scripted out the destiny of man and has given us very specific details about what nations and people groups are going to do and how they will come against His people; and no one will escape their destiny (*Revelation 13:10*).

- Fifth, it is the same power that has made Him head over all things for the benefit of the church. A little side note, 5 is the number of grace and we, of His fullness, have been given grace upon grace (*John 1:16*). This blows my mind. All this power and authority is expended specifically for our benefit. All that He has done and all that He will do is for you and me. As we studied in *verse 10*, all things will be summed up in Christ in order that He might bestow blessing upon blessings upon His bride. Talk about being loved, safe, secure, and cared for; everything He does is for us. His glory is our glory, His victory is our victory, and His rule is our rule.

This exertion of power and might “for our behalf” is a concept that I think few has understood; but we are direct recipients and participants of this power. I say participants because we are to experientially live in and with this power. So understanding these truths is not to be a matter of simply knowing good Bible doctrine; rather, in some tangible way, shape and form, this is to invade our practical life. As I was contemplating this reality, God brought me to a verse that I have always had a hard time understanding much less believing—a verse which speaks of this power in a way that is totally mind-blowing.

Matthew 21:18-22

Now in the morning, when He was returning to the city, He became hungry. Seeing a lone fig tree by the road, He came to it and found nothing on it except leaves only; and He said to it, "No longer shall there ever be any fruit from you." And at once the fig tree withered. Seeing this, the disciples were amazed and asked, "How did the fig tree wither all at once?" And Jesus answered and said to them, "Truly I say to you, if you have faith and do not doubt, you will not only do what was done to the fig tree, but even if you say to this mountain, 'Be taken up and cast into the sea,' it will happen. "And all things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive."

To me this is not only a freaky verse but it has been mishandled by many teachers. And although I think God has given me some insight into how to understand it, I have to admit that I am a little reticent to walk around believing that this kind of power and authority is mine. Now the key in this verse is obviously faith. But it is not the kind of faith that you muster up such that if you believe hard enough, without doubting, you are able to do whatever it is that "you" want. No! We have to understand this passage in light of true Biblical faith and not some mystic, personal empowerment, or wealth and prosperity notion of faith where narcissistic Christians pursue only what will give them pleasure here on earth (***James 4:3***).

Thus, if you actively believe the truth about God, and thereby do only what your Father tells you to do, only when He tells you to do it, then there will be

times when He tells you to take power and authority in His name and then what you ask for in prayer, believing, you will receive—even crazy supernatural things. He will answer because it will just be the Father working out His will in heaven on earth in and through your life.

Sometimes it will be manifested in a purely naturally supernatural way—like the way Jesus cursed the fig tree and it withered and died—and other times it will be manifested in your ability to remove the mountains of wrong belief and twisted false “truths” to which you have held. [Just so you know, in the Bible mountains are often used as metaphors for the places of security, the false god’s, or belief systems, in which we have tried to find life (*Deuteronomy 32:37; 1 Samuel 2:2; Isaiah 17:10; Jeremiah 23:29, Revelation 6:15*)]. But either way, it will be an undeniable exertion of supernatural power that comes from God. The key to experiencing this power is in “knowing” God, knowing His voice in your life, and doing only what He tells you to do; nothing more and nothing less!

As I mused on this verse, I started to think about how this power has been manifested or exerted toward me in crazy ways. I thought I would share some of my experiences as a way to both encourage you and hopefully entice you to trust yourself to God so you can know/experience His power toward you. I want you to have the courage to step out and move—even in the crazy supernatural—when the Father tells you to move.

Now, just so you know, I am telling you these stories as a way to edify and encourage you and not as a way to draw any attention to myself. These stories are about God and His power and might—they are **NOT** about me. I just happen

to be a vessel of His mercy upon which He has, from time to time, decided to bestow His power in some pretty cool ways; and, for that, I am thankful.

First, it is the power that has given me new life. I have learned that it is absolutely possible to daily live as a man who has been raised from the dead, free from the bondage of my old life, free from slavery to myself, free from the power of sin, free from slavery to the world and to the ruler of this world.

Not too long after I became a Christian the “religion of Christianity” got a hold of me and strapped me with all sorts of burdens and duties. I was told that my obedience to God had first and foremost to do with not sinning. This led me on an impossible quest to become a godly man by purging the sin in my life. Sure I was able to master control over many of the “visible” sins which others saw, but I knew what lurked within; I knew what darkness and conflict reigned in my heart. This was like the worse prison ever. I knew that God was holy and wanted me to be holy, but I did not comprehend that He had already made me holy. So I strived and strived to be like Him and I always, always failed.

But He taught me that only God is good and I therefore needed to stop trying to be like Him. He taught me that all my efforts at not sinning were just a waste of time since apart from Him I am sin. Yes, He taught me that everything about me—every thought, every attitude, every motivation, and every behavior that did not come from Him were sin—even my righteous and religious deeds, my service for God in the ministry, and all my attempts to not sin.

He taught me that the obedience of faith is what He desired: my willingness to believe that Jesus is God, such that I am willing to bet my life on His character and nature. He taught me that I had to believe that Jesus is both my personal

Gatekeeper (thus, nothing happens in my life that He does not specifically allow), and my Good Shepherd (thus, all that He allows is good and loving). With these truths tucked safely away in my soul, I discovered I could daily trust myself to His rule over my life.

He taught me that He has given me new life and has put within me a new nature. He showed me that it is entirely possible to live from this new man. He taught me that what I needed to do was renew my mind by believing the truth about Him. He asked me to let go of the lies I had been fed about Him by the enemy who has relentlessly worked within the “religion of Christianity.” Just so you know, whenever I make a reference to the “religion of Christianity” I am referring to all those parts of our belief system that have been man-made—whether or not they have been built on or comingled true Biblical concepts. If it is from man and not from God then it is religion.

He taught me that no matter how much I thought I could trust my life to myself and in effect be my own God, make my own decisions, and plan my own life, I could not. He is my Good Shepherd; therefore, I must know and follow only the decisions He has made for my life. Therefore, I must stay so close to Him that I actually know what He wants of my life. He taught me that it is only in Him that I can know and experience His life, power, and every magnificent promise He has made for those who believe Him.

I have found that it is possible to daily live in freedom. This is not something that I have psyched myself into believing; rather, this freedom has come to define my life (in other words it has been something that has been a sustained reality

and is evident to all those who know me). I have been given new life in Jesus Christ and it is miraculous.

It is the power that brought supernatural healing into my life. When I was in 8th grade I got a bad case of pneumonia and within a few months of getting over that I got bronchitis. Both of these conditions left me with an asthmatic state that seriously impacted my sports endeavors. Whenever I would run or wrestle I would literally almost pass out. I remember tournaments where they would put a bag over my face to help stabilize my breathing. Practice was the worse. Wrestling focuses so much conditioning and I would always want to work harder than anyone, but my condition made it impossible.

The guys who had been wrestling with me for many years knew how intense I was at working out before all this happened and they were bummed that I got so sick. Then in the Spring of my Freshman year I received the Lord and that summer God had a man pray over me for healing. As he prayed I had some weird sort of energy released all through my body and I was shaking and shaking. Tears were literally shooting from my eyes and I could feel God's love being poured out on my life. That night I was healed. I went to practice the next week and once again I could be at the front of every sprint and wrestle as if there was no tomorrow. Everyone in the team freaked out and the fear of God literally fell on that group of guys as they knew that God was not only real but had done something supernatural in my life.

It is the power that brought supernatural healing on another as a result of my prayers. I was at church one evening and this man who worked construction came and asked me to pray for him. He was so upset and crying. He had blown out his

knee that day and the doctors told him it would take months to heal. He had it braced and it was swollen the size of a basketball. The problem was that he had no insurance coverage from work and his family was totally dependent upon his income; however, since he was an hourly worker he would not get paid for taking time off due to injury.

I took him back to the prayer room and asked a few others to come with me. I laid hands on him, anointed him with oil, and prayed for God to heal him. I prayed as I felt God lead me and I prayed authoritatively in the Spirit for healing, but honestly at the same time my mind was filled with doubt and I was saying to myself, “please God, please God, please God let this work.”

As we were praying, the swelling in his knee started to dissipate right in front of our eyes and he was freaking out; we all were freaking out. When we were done praying he took off his brace and could stand on his knee. The next thing I know he was jumping up and down on it putting all of his weight on that knee (and he was a big guy well over 200-lbs) and he had absolutely no pain and no impairment. Here he was this big huge tough construction worker and he was balling like a baby because the power of God that had been release toward him.

It is the power that took authority over Satan, cast out demons, and kept them at bay as they amassed themselves against me. A close friend of mine called me one day saying she picked up this girl sitting outside of a grocery store who looked very sick. She had taken this girl home to see if she could help or contact her family or someone who could help. But when this girl came into the house and saw a Bible on the table she started to manifest a demonic spirit. She began speaking in strange voices, gyrating and twisting in ways that a body is not

supposed to move, and making blasphemous statements about God. My friend freaked and called me at work and told me to get out of my meeting and come over right away.

So I did and when I arrived there was already a small gathering. Apparently she called a few others as well. When I went into the house she flipped out and dropped on the floor and was having what looked like epileptic seizures. She was foaming at the mouth, her eyes rolled back in her head and when they returned I could tell they did not belong to her but to some other spirit as they looked totally different. Then she started speaking with the scariest voice I have ever heard and started saying horrific things. My friend who whose house we were in was pregnant at that time and the demonic spirit said that she would have a girl and then started cursing the baby and trying to reach out and touch my friend's stomach saying that it wanted the child, it wanted the child. Shortly after this whole ordeal my friend had a miscarriage.

Well that started what would be a 3 day experience of casting out 15 demons from this girl. I had no idea what I was doing and was totally dependent upon the Holy Spirit leading me and instructing me how to handle each separate demon. I knew there were 15 because when I asked the first demon to tell me how many were in her, it kept saying 3x5, 3x5. That first day we cast out 12 demons; each one is a full story in and of itself. But when the 12th was cast out this girl all of a sudden came to her senses and acted as if she was totally healed. She spoke in a lucid manner with a very soft and affectionate tone. She kept saying: Steve, it's me, it's me. I am ok now. Thank you so much; I am ok now.

During all this drama her parents arrived. My friend had rifled through this girl's belongings and found something that led her to her parents. Surprisingly, they let us do our thing despite the fact that they could hear their daughter screaming and freaking and making all sorts of indescribable noises. I thought for sure they would call the cops and I would be in jail, but God held them at bay.

Keep in mind they had never met me or anyone from our church before. Can you imagine? They get this strange call, they come over to this house and see people outside praying and they hear all this horrific stuff coming from inside the house. The mother later told me that she jumped out of the car and pushed by everyone and went to come inside and when she put her hand on the doorknob God told her to stop, back off, wait, and let what is happening happen. She freaked but she backed off and waited.

They had been pretty hopeless in terms of their daughter; she lived in constant darkness and depression. She had separated herself emotionally, psychologically and mentally from her family and as we found out later was into some very bizarre demonic activities (vampirism and things of that sort). But on that day God told the parents that this was necessary for their daughter's survival.

Now once the 12 demons were gone and she was in her "right mind" her parents came into the house. Her dad was this huge man who could probably have squashed me like a bug if he really wanted to so I thank God that he had restrained them on my behalf. But with their being in the room and the girl talking and acting like she was totally healed, I knew that I was not to do anything more that night. But, I also knew that we were not done. I have to say I was a bit confused for I knew there were more spirits but she seemed so ok and acted like

a person who was totally set free and delivered. Even her parents noticed the total change in her countenance. So we all joined hands and prayed and while people were deep in prayer she looked up at me with those eyes that were not her own and started to just silently laugh and laugh as if they were saying, “we won—she still belong to us.” By the way, that look scared me to death. I can still remember it and I hate it.

Now this all happened on a Friday and the next day I went to her parents house and all kinds of amazing things happened. Her dad gave his heart to the Lord and her mom totally recommitted her life to Jesus. The next day they brought their daughter to church and it was not pretty. Being in the presence of God seemed to make those remaining spirits start to manifest once again and she started to make those “noises” and everyone was freaking out. When the service was finished we ushered everyone out and said they had to leave right away and that started another long day and night of trying to cast out the final three demons. The first two had come out sometime over the next 5 or 6 hours of praying and battling but the last one was dug in and seemed as if we were powerless to cast it out. He was the silent one that never said anything to us but only to her.

At one point the spirit caused her to go into what seemed like a coma and she would not move or wake up and laid there with her eyes rolled back in her head. So we used that time to go to her house and search her room for everything connected to darkness and evil. Her mom was with us and we cleaned out her room and prayed over the room, as well as the entire house (which by the way was one of the most horrific terrifying experiences). There were evil spirits all over that place. We took her stuff out to a field and burned it and when we

tossed the match into the pile I swear it literally exploded and the flames leaped out of this pit and burned one of the kids who were with me.

That whole process took us the entire night. We went back to the church early in the morning and somewhere around 8 or 9 she woke up and once again began manifesting. She started to get extremely violent and this little girl that weighed perhaps 98-lbs was able to keep 5 large men (including her dad) from restraining her. I have never seen anything like it. And just so you know, this little girl also suffered from cerebral palsy so there is no way on earth, under any circumstances, she should have been able to do what she was doing.

Through the next 7 hours we finally broke the power that this demon had over this girl. I could tell when it finally happened and I was expecting it to leave when all of a sudden the strangest thing took place. It started to have a conversation with this girl telling her that she needed him to live and he is the only one who has ever loved her and has ever truly been her friend. It said, "God is the one who struck her with her horrible disease and he is the one who has helped her all these years." She started to talk back to it and say that she needs him, can't live without him, and does not want him to go but wants him stay and be with her.

This conversation went back and forth for a while when suddenly she once again became entirely lucid and said that she was done. She said she did not want the spirit to leave and so we stopped. I knew there was nothing more we could do; our work had been done. I also knew that the power of this demon had been broken and it could no longer control her against her will. I knew that as soon as she decided she wanted it to leave it had to leave; it had no choice and it had no power to do otherwise.

After that experience, I could literally see legions of black spirits around my house and around the neighborhood in which I lived. I was encircled by these spirits. My 2-dogs would not even leave the porch; I had to drag them down the driveway in order to go running and pray over them so they would not be so freaked. It was weird that I could see these spirits, but I think God wanted me to know that even though a great army was amassed against me, I had nothing to fear. He had provided a circle of safety of which they could not penetrate. His power toward me was indomitable. And while that was fine and wonderful, being able to see them for all those months was more than a little unnerving.

Throughout the next year I would see that girl from time to time as her parents would bring her to things and it was always scary. That thing inside of her would look at me with total hatred and make horrific noises as if it wanted nothing more than to kill me. But during that year people from the church started to reach out to this girl and be her friend and show her the love of Jesus. In addition, the dynamic in her family totally changed now that her dad was a believer. And every time I would see her I would tell her that God loves her; although I would stand a bit beyond scratching distance as she tried to attack me on different occasions.

Then about 1 year later she came up to me at church and wanted to talk to me (I have to admit I was a bit scared and kept my distance). She proceeded to tell me that she was thankful for how I loved her and for all I did for her and wanted me to forgive her for everything she had said and done, including all her attempts to hurt me. She said she wanted to go to the prayer room and pray to receive Jesus. Ok, my mind was totally blown! God let me see and participate in her great deliverance. The demon lost; it had to leave as it was no longer welcome. Her

heat was no longer its home. Jesus filled her and she now lives as a child of God free from the darkness.

It is the power to be invisible. Most of you have heard this story but it is totally cool so I will tell it anyways. The day before the girls were going to leave and hike the AT, and be gone for 6-months, Andrea and I wanted to go and have a quiet lunch together. But as we paid for our food and turned the corner to go sit down, seated in the dining area was a person who is totally obsessed with Andrea and is very well known to me. If she would have seen us our time would have been ruined. She would have been all over Andrea with no sensitivity at all to our wanting to be together—I am not exaggerating about this woman's obsession.

Andrea and I quickly turned around and went the other way where there were a few scattering of places to sit, but the problem is that the utensils we needed were right behind where this person was sitting. There was no way past her and she never misses anything; she is the most observant person I know. So we had to decide if we were going to leave or stay with the possibility that our lunch and day would be ruined. I told Andrea that I did not want us to be controlled by anyone in that way and God did not want us to live in fear. So Andrea suggested we pray that God would make me invisible as I go and get all the utensils; and so we did. I was nervous but I confidently walked right up to her table and went around it got our stuff and walked back right in front of her table and she never noticed at all even though both she and the person she was with (who also knows me) were staring right at me the entire time.

Andrea and I were praising Jesus and we got to have a wonderful lunch together. Then we saw that they were getting up and we were sure they were

going to walk in front of us on their way out so we prayed again for invisibility and sure enough they got up and left and never noticed us. This may sound silly, but you have to understand this person does not miss anything. I have been back to that place many times and she always sees me no matter where I happen to be or who I happen to be with. God's power was manifested over our lives and covered and protected us.

It is the power to walk through fire and not be burned and pass through the waves of the storm and not drown. As many of you know, just over 8-years ago God told me He was going to bring a storm into my life and He was going to so rock my world that I would cringe in terror and reel and stagger around like a drunkard. And boy did He unleash a doozy of a storm that still has waves which sweep over my life. Fortunately, He warned me about what He was going to do. He told me that I would have enemies in my own household that would attempt to destroy me and that those who I thought were friends and loved ones would turn against me and assail me. He said they would even hunt me down and purposefully hurt and damage me.

The scale upon which this became true is still mind-numbing. He took away jobs, money, and pretty much everything that was precious. I even almost lost my daughter's life to a horrific disease. But the worst of it was not the things of this world that were taken from me but the pain that He inflicted me with in my soul. I remember one day God let my friend Lesley feel, for about 3 minutes, the pain that I was inflicted with 24-hours a day. She was overcome and could not even function for those 3 minutes and was in sheer agony. So believe me it was more than real. God also stole away my sleep and I still have no idea how I functioned.

But the miracle is that during this entire time His power was manifested toward me. Even though this storm has been worse than I could ever have imagined, He has held me in His right hand and I have stood. In all my reeling and staggering around He made sure that I did not fall. He sustained me and in the darkest of days, in the midst of the greatest pain, He taught me about Him. He showed me how much He loves me and taught me to always turn to Him. He even had me care for others and teach them everything that He had been teaching me. As I look back on it, I am not sure how that happened but it did and God used me to help others become convinced that He is love and all that He does is love.

He also enabled me to forgive those who treated me so horribly—now for the life of me I don't trust many of them, but I hold no bitterness toward them. This is not normal. It is totally the supernatural power of God being manifested in my life because if you knew what they have done you would know that I would normally want to hurt them real bad. But God's mercy has prevailed over my heart.

These are just a few of the stories from my life which demonstrate the ways in which the great and mighty power of God has been manifested toward me. And if it has been manifested toward me, then it is also available to be manifested in your life as well.

Ephesians 1:22-23

And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all. (ESV)

Verse 23 is something of a mystery in that it says we—the church—play some part in fulfilling Jesus. Make no mistake; this is not to be understood in the sense that God is not complete because He is. Rather, this to be understood in light of the means by which God has chosen to manifest Himself to all of creation. He has chosen to live in and through His bride and to let her be a physical manifestation of His presence here on earth. God has chosen to take sinful men and women and make them holy and present His lovely and perfect bride before all of creation so that everything seen and unseen can marvel.

Now God fills the world with His presence—He fills all in all—and no one has failed to be exposed to His glory and majesty. But He also does something extra special and supernatural with His bride. God has given Jesus as our head so we can be continually filled with the very presence and glory of God, with His wisdom, goodness, truth, holiness, righteousness, and the power to live unto Him.

He has also bestowed upon us the power to live united, as one, with all the pieces of the body fitting perfectly together such that His body is complete in Him. The head “needs” the body (only because that is how God has chosen to work—remember He is in no way limited in His ability to manifest Himself in any way He wants), and the body most desperately needs the head in order to even know how to move or function. We are inextricably connected with each other and wholly dependent upon Jesus to tell each one of us what to do and when to do it. This is a truth we must never forget; He is the head and we are not. And because He is the head He is always ready to manifest His mighty power in our life. We just need to stay connected to the head and cling to Him so we are not out there on our own separated from the life that is our inheritance.

Well that finishes this amazing prayer and we will venture into Chapter 2 next week.

Let's Pray