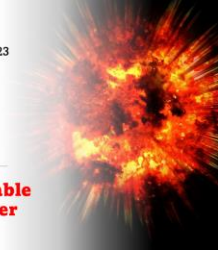


Ephesians 1:15-23

Incomparable
Great Power



“Incomparable Great Power”

(Ephesians 1:15-23)(8.27.23)

Ephesians 1:15-23 Amplified Bible

15 For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all God’s people, **16** I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers; **17** [I always pray] that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may grant you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation [that gives you a deep and personal and intimate insight] into the true knowledge of Him [for we know the Father through the Son]. **18** And [I pray] that the eyes of your heart [the very center and core of your being] may be enlightened [flooded with light by the Holy Spirit], so that you will know *and* cherish the [\[a\]](#)hope [the divine guarantee, the confident expectation] to which He has called you, the riches of His glorious inheritance in the [\[b\]](#)saints (God’s people), **19** and [so that you will begin to know] what the immeasurable *and* unlimited *and* surpassing greatness of His [active, spiritual] power is in us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of His mighty strength **20** which He [\[c\]](#)produced in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His own right hand in the heavenly *places*, **21** far above all rule and authority and power and dominion [whether angelic or human], and [far above] every name that is named [above every title that can be conferred], not only in this age *and* world but also in the one to come. **22** And He [\[d\]](#)put all things [in every realm] in subjection under Christ’s feet, and [\[e\]](#)appointed Him as [supreme and

authoritative] head over all things in the church, ²³ which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills *and* completes all things in all [believers].

The word of God for the people of God.

LET US PRAY.

Title: **"Incomparable Great Power"**

INTRODUCTION:

"With or Without Power"

Doctor Gordon of Boston used to say that as you passed along Washington street of that city, or Broadway, New York, you might see stores with the card in the window, "To rent, with or without power," and any one could rent the store, and by paying something extra could have power furnished from the generator in the rear. Doctor Gordon thought it would be a good thing to ask men and women when they joined the church if they wanted to be a member on the "with power" or the "without power" basis, and if the latter, to tell them there were no vacancies for that kind in the church, it already had too many members without power.

BODY:

Where in the Bible will we find the word omnipotence? It is not to be found; but in theological study, it is considered an attribute of God...God Almighty.

"Omnipotence is the attribute of God's unconditioned power to do that which He wills in accordance with His nature."

I am kind of working backwards in this scripture. Last week, we looked at the Church being the fullness of Jesus Christ. And this same scripture teaches that Jesus is the fullness that fills all things for believers.

Surely, we can see, as the Apostle Paul prays and preaches for the enlightenment of our hearts, that this requires and includes knowing the incomparable great power of God. If we are filled with Jesus, we are filled with Jesus' power. Not only individually but even more so as the Church, the Body of Christ.

Paul's prayer for us to KNOW is not merely for an intellectual attainment. It should be part of the fabric of our faith. This knowledge is an experience of God's power. It is a knowledge of the mind, heart, and spirit. This knowledge is woven into our Christian walk and empowers us.

Alexander Maclaren preached it like this:

"How do we know a power? By thrilling beneath its force. How are we to know the greatness of the power but because it comes surging and rejoicing into our aching emptiness, and lifts us buoyant above our temptations and weakness? Paul was not asking for these people theological conceptions. He was asking that their spirits might be so saturated with and immersed in that great ocean of force that pours from God as that they should never, henceforth, be able to doubt the greatness of that power which wrought in them.

The knowledge that comes from experience is the knowledge that we all ought to seek. It is not merely to

be desired that we should have right and just conceptions, but that we should have the vital knowledge which is, and which comes from, life eternal."

"That knowledge should shame us into contrition, when we think of such force at our disposal, and such poor results. That knowledge should widen our conceptions, enlarge our desires, breathe a brave confidence into our hopes, should teach us to expect great things of God, and to be intolerant of present attainments whilst anything remains unattained. And it should stimulate our vigorous effort, for no man will long seek to be better, if he is convinced that the effort is hopeless."

"There are two measures of the immeasurable power -- the one is that infinite limit, of 'the power which He wrought in Christ,' and the other the practical limit. The working measure of our spiritual life is our faith. In plain English, we can have as much of God as we want. We do have as much as we want.

And if, in touch with the power that can shatter a universe, we only get a little thrill that is scarcely perceptible to ourselves, and all unnoticed by others, whose fault is that? If, coming to the fountain that laughs at drought, and can fill a universe with its waters, we scarcely bear away a straitened drop or two, that barely refreshes our parched lips, and does nothing to stimulate the growth of the plants of holiness in our gardens, whose fault is that?

The practical measure of the power is for us the measure of our belief and desire. And if we only go to Him, as I

pray we all may, and continue there, and ask from Him strength, according to the riches that are treasured in Jesus Christ, we shall get the old answer, 'According to your faith be it unto you.'"

In describing this power of God, the Apostle Paul cannot seem to quite reach the pinnacle of omnipotence. The full and infinite power of God Almighty is just out of reach of finite human conceptualization. It is a Great Power; but more than that, it is an Incomparable Great Power. Nevertheless, Paul must use comparisons to help us comprehend.

We can only begin to know the full extent of the Lord Almighty's power. It is immeasurable and unlimited and of surpassing greatness. It is not simply potential power. No, it is in accordance with the WORKING of His MIGHTY STRENGTH!

And yet, where is this power at WORK in the Church in America. Christianity has been in decline in our nation for decades now. The last 20 years have seen a dramatic downward trend. Some churches have no pastor. Every major Protestant denomination has gone through conflict and division. The upward trend is the closing of churches.

We are part of this struggle. We know too well the drop in attendance and the respective financial troubles. We too have been in conflict over essential theological issues with our denominational leadership.

As way of illustration, let us consider the lighting system in our sanctuary. There are three rheostats that control the brightness of the lights in three different zones. They

click on and then you rotate the dial to increase the brightness. Very slowly over the years, the main rheostat has been deteriorating, increasing resistance.

Because it happened so gradually, we did not notice until the conditions made it obvious. One cloudy Sunday morning, Shirley and I felt like we just couldn't make the sanctuary bright enough. Then I realized how much brighter the lights were up in the balcony. We need a costly overhaul to bring our lighting back to vibrant life.

At this point, my attention was to preach about Resurrection Power. Oh, the heights and depths of this miraculous truth. The raising of the Messiah is the arch of Christendom's power.

Of course, this addresses the crucifixion of Jesus. This was the plan of Father God to sacrifice the Perfect Lamb of God to take away the sin of the world. Before the foundation of the world, the Lord knew our shortcomings and failures and yet made a way for us to transcend our fallen natures in this cold dark world.

Death has been permanently defeated. The Lord Jesus paid our price. We are the redeemed of God. We have been set free. But much more is promised than our heavenly reward and eternity with our God.

What is involved in bringing a dead, cold, human body back to life? Decay must be overcome. The stink and stigma of death must be displaced by the sweet aroma of the love of God. The love of God, who can comprehend such a love that cost the life of the Son of God.

In preaching this scripture, Charles Spurgeon declares that the creation of the world pales in comparison to the gift of New Life. In creation, God had no resistance from the void, chaos, and emptiness. But in bringing the dead human soul to new life, there is the resistance of human rebellion and the Devil and all His demons.

We almost take this promise of new life for granted, but it is a miraculous thing. Where sin and indulgence prevailed they are displaced by self-sacrifice and the denying of self and taking up our cross. It is a turn-about of great proportions. It is the inauguration of a new existence. Not only has Jesus Christ been risen from the dead, but in our baptism, we too celebrate our death and resurrection through Jesus Christ.

And, this is not only for this time and place. No grave can keep our bodies down. John 5:28–29 (NIV84)

28 “Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice 29 and come out—those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned.

1 Thessalonians 4:16–18 (NIV84)

¹⁶ For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. ¹⁸ Therefore encourage each other with these words.

Then there is the Ascension Power of God. After Jesus was crucified and died, the scriptures describe how Jesus descended into the underworld. The Apostle Peter alludes to this - 1 Peter 4:6 (NIV84) For this is the reason the gospel was preached even to those who are now dead, so that they might be judged according to men in regard to the body, but live according to God in regard to the spirit.

Acts 1:6-11 (NIV84)

⁶ So when they met together, they asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?"

⁷ He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. ⁸ But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

⁹ After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight.

¹⁰ They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. ¹¹ "Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven."

So, Jesus has risen from the depths of Hades to the ethereal place at the right hand of God.

As part of Jesus' ascension He has been given Dominion Power. He is seated at the very righthand of God, a place of prominence, power, and precedence that cannot be

overcome or even rightly conceived. Jesus is above, but more, **far above** all rule and authority and power and dominion [whether angelic or human], and [far above] every name that is named [above every title that can be conferred], not only in this age *and* world but also in the one to come.

Jesus' place in God's kingdom is unquestionable and unapproachable. It is an Exalted Power. God put all things [in every realm] in subjection under Christ's feet, and appointed Him as [supreme and authoritative] head over all things. Philippians 2:9-10 (NIV84)

⁹ Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name,

¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

AND, I thought that maybe all that was sufficient to address the incomparable great power of God. But, I had my reservations. Maybe it was too abstract of an explanation. How can I make this real for us? How do I convey the truth and the applicability?

Many of you know that Karen Williams has been battling two different cancers. Her husband Frank, has expressed to me that he was disappointed in the response of the church. I believe, he was saying that he was disappointed in my response – not being supportive enough or being there in presence. I have expressed that my wife, Carol, and I have been praying every night for them. But, I know they must feel isolated in their struggle and pain.

This week, I was listening to Christian Radio and heard an interview with Andrea Herzer. One of Karen's cancers is the same as Andrea's. Andrea wrote a book called *Incurable Faith – 120 Devotions of Lasting Hope for Lingering Health Issues*. The book arrived yesterday and I plan to deliver it today. Here is an excerpt:

“My Power Source”

Isaiah 40:28–29 (NIV84)

²⁸ Do you not know?

Have you not heard?

The Lord is the everlasting God,
the Creator of the ends of the earth.

He will not grow tired or weary,
and his understanding no one can fathom.

²⁹ He gives strength to the weary
and increases the power of the weak.

“When visiting family in Florida, I decided to take my three children to Disney World. I wanted their childhoods to be filled with joyful memories and the knowledge that, despite being ill, their mom did all she could for them. You may wonder how someone with chronic pain can manage to visit Disney World. I have three words for you: electric conveyance vehicle, otherwise known as a mobility scooter.

The ECV is a blessing for those of us who cannot manage to walk for hours on end. I used it frequently throughout

the long days in the theme park, walking for a bit when my back hurt from sitting. I was so grateful to have a device that enabled me to enjoy Disney World with my children. However, I was very aware of the looks that others gave me; some looked with curiosity and others looked with pity. Many looked with anger because of the extra time it took me to drive up a ramp on the resort bus. I was ashamed of my need.

One day, while sitting on the monorail in the ECV, I felt incredibly vulnerable and sensitive to the stares of those around me. Suddenly a Bible verse I had memorized years before came to my mind: "He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak." The Lord spoke to my heart, saying, I am increasing your power. You cannot walk this park in your own strength, but I have provided the power for you to manage it. I sat up in the cart, feeling so blessed that the Lord allowed me to have this external power source. I met curious stares with a joyful smile because I no longer felt ashamed of my need. Instead, I felt grateful for my provision.

Where is God providing strength in your life? Perhaps he has given you people who help you perform daily tasks. Maybe He has allowed you to listen to a sermon on the television or computer when illness prevents your from attending church. God brings power into our lives in so many ways. I will always ask Him to increase my strength during illness, but now I will also notice the areas in which He has already provided it. Whether our Father uses an external power source such as an ECV or provides me with internal power to withstand my painful

struggles, he does indeed give strength to the weary and increase the power of the weak.”

This is a very touching and powerful testimony and exemplifies God’s power in one particular life. The incomparable power of God is intended for the transformation of the world. It overcomes physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual sickness.

CONCLUSION:

Puritan preacher Samuel Chadwick lamented, “The substitution of secularization and social activity is a confession of failure. **Let the Churches pray souls out of their graves, if they would do the work of God.**

Our most urgent need is that we should know the exceeding greatness of His power in the resurrection of the dead.”

“How miserably our attainments and achievements contrast with the possibilities set forth in this standard miracle! [The miracle of the new birth.] What weaklings and cripples we are! How ineffectual our service in grappling with the gigantic forces of evil! Iniquity is openly defiant, and scoffers mock at our vain formula of traditional power.

Why are we so helpless while there are such resources of strength? There are non-conductors of power. The tiniest thing may turn its current, or cut it off. So, in the life of the soul and in the work of the Church, there are things fatal to power. Sin is fatal to power; carnality is fatal to power; worldliness is fatal to power; self-seeking is fatal

to power; fear of man is fatal to power; in a word, unbelief is fatal to power.

But the heart that is surrendered, cleansed, sanctified, and possessed of God, realizes the infinite resources that are ours in Christ. The man that is obedient, and claims by living faith the abiding fulness of the Eternal Spirit, the power of God is for him, and in him, and through him to the resurrection of the dead. God grant us to know "Him and the power of His resurrection"!"

God of Love and God of Power (#578)

1. God of love and God of power,
grant us in this burning hour
grace to ask these gifts of thee,
daring hearts and spirits free.

Refrain:

God of love and God of power,
thou hast called us for this hour.

2. We are not the first to be
banished by our fears from thee;
give us courage, let us hear
heaven's trumpets ringing clear.

3. All our lives belong to thee,
thou our final loyalty;

slaves are we whene'er we share
that devotion anywhere.

4. God of love and God of power,
make us worthy of this hour;
offering lives if it's thy will,
keeping free our spirits still.

Refrain

God of love and God of power,
thou hast called us for this hour.

Amen and amen. Let us pray.