

To the Saints at Kossuth Street . . . Be a Praying community!

Ephesians 1:20-23 October 3, 2010

Intro. Recently I asked someone about their job and his explanation was that for a certain rather sizeable project, he was responsible to assess and provide the necessary power that would allow the building and machines to function productively according to their mission or purpose. A miscalculation regarding how much power is required or choosing a power source that is insufficient would result in all kinds of frustration and trouble.

Power is essential to the Christian life. Power is essential for the church to be the church of the living God. We are not talking about the type of power that we demand from God to allow us to throw away our crutches, have the better life that we deserve or be released from the consequences of our sinful choices. We believe the Bible when it teaches us that God's power has given to us everything we need for life and godliness. We believe that the very foundations of the church are built on the statement that all power and authority belong to the crucified and risen Christ who now is at work to rescue and redeem people to himself.

If someone were to do an engineering study on our lives or church to measure power requirements it would minimally have to include these 11 needs

The power necessary to break the grip of selfishness and pride in your heart.

The power required to take what is dead and incapable and make it alive with new life.

The strength that must be available to stop sinful habits and get out of wrong living ruts.

The energy that is essential to endure disappointment and suffering with patience and joy.

The ability to continue to love and invest in other people's lives even when there are no visible results.

The explosive force that is critical to turn a person from rejecting God to repentant faith.

The 'get-up-and-go' that is basic to seeking God in prayer and Bible study when it feels like he has turned his back on you.

The spiritual muscle that must be present in the middle of the night when sleep is impossible and anxieties are about to overwhelm you.

The power to actually consider others and their things as more important than yours.

The energy to obey God and serve others when you are weary or at the end of your rope.

The power to transform bitterness and complaining to love and gratitude.

These are just some of the power requirements for the follower of Jesus Christ. The essence of biblical Christianity is that the person who has saving faith is enthusiastically convinced that they are powerless as well as condemned. The follower of Christ is dependent on outside, supernatural power. When the follower of Christ forgets that truth, he finds that relying on his own power is insufficient and painful.

'I am praying for you' is one way to connect or reconnect to the essential power source for the Christian life. One answer for the self focused and anemic church is a fresh understanding and commitment to praying for one another that we would know the strength of God in our lives.

This morning as we continue to learn and grow in our understanding of praying for each other, we focus our attention on sharpening our focus in prayer . . . especially praying for each other to be connected in very real ways to the amazing, limitless power of God.

Read Ephesians 1:15-23

We have looked at the 6 prayer requests targeted at heart change found in these verses. Let's review them quickly before we focus our attention on learning to pray for strength for each other.

I am praying for you . . .

- a. That God's glory would rule your heart. *the Father of glory* 17
- b. That God's Word would rule your heart. *wisdom and revelation* 17
- c. That God's Spirit would rule your heart. *may give you a spirit of . . .* 17
- d. That you will experience hope in God's calling on your life. 18
- e. That you will appreciate God's love for you. 18
- f. That you will encounter God's active strength on your behalf. 19

Verse 19 contains 4 terms for God's strength, ability and power with 2 descriptive, enlarging adjectives.

God's strength is described as surpassing and great.

Surpassing/immeasurable – to excel, stand out, go beyond; 3:19 love; 2:7 grace

Greatness – big, large, wide

This request is more than simply that you would be strengthened, but that you would experience and encounter the immeasurable and great power of God as it is at work in you.

Verses 20-23 serve to explain and motivate us to pray for each other to experience the immeasurable greatness of God's power as it works itself out in our lives. The power of God is described to us in such a way that we would be quick to depend on it and ask for it.

Verse 20 begins with the phrase 'that he worked.' God's power that is available for your life and those you pray for is the same power, not similar to or close to, that he demonstrated, exerted and displayed when he did all the things described in the following verses.

These four statements describing the power of God tell us that God's power is both sufficient and available for every need that we have for strength. Considering this is the power provided and available, we should pray earnestly, often and intelligently for each other. It is both tragic and easy to become disconnected from our supernatural source of strength.

God's power available for you is displayed in . . .

- 1. Raising Christ from the dead. 20 Power over sin and death.
He lives forever!
- God's power is life giving. Cmp. 2:5-6 Romans 4:24-25

2. Exalting Christ to his right hand. 20 Power to be Lord of all.
He reigns forever!

Seated in position of unparalleled honor and universal authority.

Cmp Jesus claim Mt. 26:64; 22:41-46 cmp apostles message Acts 2:32-26; 5:31

3. Subjecting all powers under Christ. 21-22 Power over forces of evil.
He has all authority forever!

Comprehensive scope of supremacy -far above, both now and any age, every conceivable power
Reality of evil forces both in the heavens as well as standing behind earthly/human institutions
Illus. Col. 2:6-18, 21-23

4. Giving Christ universal headship. 22-23 Power over all things.
He is supreme ruler forever!

The 'head' functions as the cohesive, enabling, ruling and guiding factor for the body

Christ has headship over all things.

Christ has been given to the Church as the church's head. He is to exercise functional control.

The church is the visible expression of Christ's headship . . . the church manifests the fullness of
Christ's power, Spirit, grace and gifts.

Col. 1:19; 2:9

6 Power Prayer Requests . . . since the same power that God used to raise Jesus from the dead, exalt him to his right hand, subject all powers to him and give him universal headship is available and at work in our lives . . . I am praying that you will encounter God's active strength on your behalf in these ways:

Your first instinct in these settings may be to pray for something else rather than God's power . . .

1. Proclaim the gospel in power. 1Cor. 2:1-5; Rom. 1:16
2. Appreciate God's love in power. Eph. 3:16-18
3. Embrace your weaknesses in power. 2Cor. 12:9-10
4. Endure joyfully in power. Col. 1:11-12
5. Persevere in ministry in power. Col. 1:28-29
6. Face opposition in power. 2Tim. 4:17

This focused, God pleasing prayer for each other is absolutely essential for the advance of God's kingdom and glory in our church in these days.

Study Questions

1. Read Ephesians 1:15-23 together. Give extra attention to the final of the three requests regarding strength in verses 19-23 by observing terms and their connection to each other.
2. What is the actual request that Paul prays for the believers at Ephesus in verse 19? How would you put it in your own terms and still be faithful to the meaning of the verse? What is the difference between being strengthened and knowing the immeasurable strength of God that is at work in the lives of his people?
3. Read and review the 11 power requirements for the follower of Christ listed in the introduction to the sermon. What are your thoughts or observations about that list? Does it take more power to heal someone from a life threatening disease or to help a person endure pain/disappointment with joy and gratitude? Why?
4. Review the six prayer requests from the notes found in verses 17-19. Share from your experience how these requests have shaped or encouraged your praying for others.
5. What is the point of describing the strength/power of God the way the Apostle does in verses 20-23? How do these descriptions connect to you praying for each other?
6. Of the 4 descriptive statements about the power of God, which one catches your attention . . . which description helps you 'get it' regarding understanding the power of God better? Why?
7. Review the six power prayer requests. Can you think of others that should be on the list? Share with your group how they can pray for you connecting these requests to the specific circumstances you are facing currently.
8. Spend time praying for one another in the ways you are learning from these studies.