

I. THE PRESENCE OF GOD'S MIGHTY POWER IN YOU IS REAL

¹² Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; ¹³ for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure. ¹⁴ Do all things without complaining and disputing, ¹⁵ that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, ¹⁶ holding fast the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain (Phil. 2:12-16).

A. God works in you to will and to do for His good pleasure. Therefore, work out your salvation. Once you realize that God's power at work in you is so real and mighty, you will have a reverential fear and trembling as you live your life. This fear and trembling is not because we are afraid that God might not like us or be disappointed in that we don't measure up to His standards. It is the by-product of understanding that God's mighty power is at work in you.

B. This will result in you living without complaining and disputing and you will shine as lights in the world.

¹ And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God. ² For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. ³ I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling. ⁴ And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, ⁵ that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God (1 Cor. 2:1-5)

C. Paul was probably very educated and skilled in giving speeches and teaching publicly. Yet, he purposely came in weakness, fear, and much trembling. He relied on the demonstration of the Spirit and His power. We need apostolic preachers who will proclaim the Word of the Lord that pierces hearts of men and moves angels and demons.

D. Preaching with power doesn't necessarily mean you have to speak loudly or before a big crowd of people. It can be one on one, and it can be conversational in tone. The power is of God.

⁸ Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. ⁹ And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. ¹⁰ Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong (2 Cor. 12:8-10).

E. Paul asks the Lord to remove a hindrance in his life. God does not, but shows Paul that His power is made perfect in weakness. Therefore, Paul learns to boast in his weaknesses. This is completely opposite of the spirit of this age. Learn to be okay with your weakness. I find myself wanting to explain that our church is small. Be okay with that. We're just a small church. Don't make a big deal of it. Talk about the Kingdom of God. Don't talk about the church. People who want the kingdom won't care what church it's at, what color the carpet is, whether there is a certain program for a certain age group, etc.. those things are nice to have, but they are secondary. Where can I find peace, forgiveness of sin, healing?

- F. It is God's grace that Paul could stay in weakness. When we are mature in the Lord, the more we will be in weakness. You will not reach a state where you are so mighty. You will grow less and less until Jesus is seen in you, Christ is formed in you (Gal. 4:19).
- G. Maturity is when you are no longer centered on yourself. You become full of God's Spirit. Christ becomes your all. For me, to live is Christ.

For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain (Phil 1:21).

II. JESUS MUST INCREASE. I MUST DECREASE.

Then Peter said, "Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk." (Acts 3:6)

- A. What did Peter have that he could give to the man? Peter had the reality of the Kingdom of God at work in his life. He understood kingdom authority.

⁷ "And as you go, preach, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.'⁸ "Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons. Freely you have received, freely give."⁹ "Provide neither gold nor silver nor copper in your money belts,¹⁰ "nor bag for your journey, nor two tunics, nor sandals, nor staffs; for a worker is worthy of his food (Matt. 10:7-10).

- B. Evangelism is not persuasion: trying to convince somebody to believe Jesus. Evangelism is proclamation. Making Jesus known. Holy Spirit will convict people.
- C. The main points of the Gospel are simple: Repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Sin separates you from God. Jesus died so that if you believe in Him, you may be reconciled to God. Would you like to do that? Say: "I repent.. I believe..."

⁶ For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.⁷ But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us.⁸ We are hard pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair;⁹ persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed --¹⁰ always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body (2 Cor. 4:6-10).

- D. God have given us treasure. It is in jars of clay. It is the things of God's heavenly kingdom, deposited in weak earthly vessels.
- E. Parkway Fellowship. Let's not draw any unnecessary attention to ourselves. Keep it to a minimum. Let our message be the message of the Kingdom of God. That was Jesus' message. That was Paul's message. Let it be our message.

There is a world that is malnourished and dying. All the bread is moldy and there is no pure water. All the fountains that people drink from are polluted. We have heavenly bread and living water (Jesus). God displays it through us, in earthly, plain containers. We are not to draw attention to the containers. We are to proclaim the quality and the reality of the bread and water that has been given to us.

- F. It is God's grace that we live with humble means. Silver and gold we don't have much. Do we have the message and authority of the Kingdom? To Peter, that was much more valuable.