

Intro: Please open your Bibles to Ephesians 1:15. (Opening words: Brave the Snow, Next Sunday. Big Sunday. Bring Sunday, Souper Bowl Sunday and then Super Bowl Parties – maybe you’ve heard of one of the teams playing in that game . . .) In 2006, a father and son were standing outside of their apartment in Durham, NC when two men looking for a cigarette approached them. When the son entered the apartment to meet their request, the two strangers pulled out their guns and an armed robbery was in full effect. One robber held the father outside of the apartment at gunpoint, while the other robber made the 3 adults and 4 children hit the floor inside the apartment while he confiscated as many valuables as he could find. After they gathered jewelry, cash, credit cards, and other valuables, they had the idea to escort the fearful mother to an ATM so she could unload more cash for them.

While all of this madness was going on, their four year-old-son, Stevie, snuck into his room, and began to execute his masterminded plan. He had enough of these bad guys, so he slipped on his red Mighty Morphin Power Ranger outfit, and ran into the living room waving his plastic sword like a real superhero yelling: “Yah! Yah! Get away from my family! Yah!” Believe it or not, Stevie spooked the robbers, and they abandoned their ATM machine plan and fled the scene. **PICTURE OF STEVIE** {Does this guy look fierce or what.}. Little Stevie Long saved the day! The police report actually attests to this. It reads: “During the robbery, a ... boy snuck into his bedroom, dressed himself in a Power Ranger costume *and armed himself with a plastic sword.* . . The child then exited his room and approached the armed suspect, in an attempt to protect his family.” When the local paper interviewed the family, Stevie was quoted as saying, “I scared the bad guys away!”

Now, somewhat comically, the family also said they needed to help Stevie distinguish between fantasy and reality. As his aunt told the newspaper reporter: “He fully believed he morphed!”

You see the issue, right? Stevie thought he had a power he did not really possess. That was his problem. And it one we can enjoy and laugh at, but we have our own problem.

FCF: We have a different problem in the church, and it is a huge problem. We’re not much different than Stevie, we just live on the opposite end of the spectrum. He thought he had a power that he really did not possess. We hold the unlimited power of God’s Spirit in us, but often live as if we do not possess it. This morning we are going to consider the . . .

“The Power of God for You”
Ephesians 1:15-23
RHC – 1/25/15

The primary encouragement I want to give each of us today is to . . .

The Point: Live your life with the limitless power of God.

Let’s read the first few verses of our passage. *Read 15-18a.* These verses

I. Thank God for what he has done for those who believe (1:15-18).

Verse 15 begins by saying: “For this reason...” He’s referring back to what he just wrote in Ephesians 1:3-14 where he praised God for our new identity and how he has give us every spiritual blessing in Jesus. Chosen, loved, adopted, redeemed, forgiven, sealed, and the list goes on.

- In light of this, Paul thanks God for them and prays a very intentional and bold prayer.
- Before we look at Paul’s prayer – I want to ask two foundational questions concerning prayer. #1) Why Pray? And #2) How Should we Pray? My hope is that these simple encouragements, in addition to these verses, will JUMPSTART your prayer life or at least give it a significant boost.

Why Pray? Let me give you four quick reasons, and these are certainly *not* exhaustive.

1) **Relationship: God desires a relationship with us.**

2) **Dependence:** Prayer displays our humble recognition that we are needy before God. **Everything comes from him**

3) **Change: God changes us.** We approach God primarily because we want things, because we want God to fulfill our will for our lives, but prayer has an awesome ability to pull us into God's heart and align us with his will.

4) **God Listens & Responds: He hears and moves.** – Do you think Paul would have prayed this prayer if he thought he was simply wasting his breath? No. We pray because God hears and responds.

To these we could add many others and talk about the faith-building, comfort-bringing, earth-shaking effects of prayer.

How Should We Pray? FADES Acronym

** *Fades Acronym is borrowed from John Piper – See “Be Devoted to Prayer” sermon on desiringgod.org*

* Piper says, “There is no significance to the word “fades.” . . . But if you wanted to force it, you could say without these pairs, devotion to prayer “fades.”” ☺ Good enough. . .

* I want you to write these down.

F – Free & Formed (No structure ANNNND Structure – Scripture, Written prayers; Valley of vision)

A – Alone & Assembled (personally – prayer closet ANNNDD with others; this is not a crutch!)

D – Desperate & Delighted (Serious, earnest, urgent ANNNDD full of joy and gladness)

E – Explosive & Extended (short ANNNDDD long)

S – Spontaneous & Scheduled (whenever we are led to pray AANNND at times set aside for prayer)

T: So what does Paul pray?

- First, he expresses gratitude because their vertical relationship with God was established through “faith in the Lord Jesus” and their horizontal relationships were thriving because they possessed “love toward all the saints.”
- Paul loved them so much that he could say that in v. 16 that he constantly remembered them in prayer.
- *Verse 17 “that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him”*
- Paul wants them to possess wisdom and spiritual insight “in the knowledge of him.” Don’t miss that. Everything that follows is predicated on our knowledge of God. The most important thing about you (to paraphrase A. W. Tozer) is what you think about God. The knowledge of God is the knowledge influencing *all other knowledge*.
- Now *verse 18: “having the eyes of your hearts enlightened”* Paul says, “There is seeing *and there is seeing.*” You may see perfect with your physical eyes, but how great is your spiritual sight?
- Helen Keller was born blind and deaf, but that did not stop her from become one of the most influential people in the 20th century. She famously said: “**The only thing worse than being blind is having sight but no vision.**” – Helen Keller
- Paul prays the Ephesians would possess spiritual vision and see three realities true for them because of the work of Christ. He covers the first two in verse 18.

First, he wants them to “**know what is the hope which he has called you**”

- This is how we should pray for one another. When we experience the brokenness of the world around us, we should remember what God has done in giving us such a great hope.
- Our future was not bright. It was bleak. But the death and resurrection of Christ have forever changed that.
- Now, we have hope.
- Hope refers to having a confident expectation in God’s ability to fulfill his promises. Our hope is secure because Jesus will unite all things and right every wrong in our world.

Secondly, he prays they would “[**know**] what are the **riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints**”

- And we must immediately ask: whose inheritance? This is not our inheritance but the riches of God’s glorious inheritance.

- You say, what's his inheritance? It's us! His church, his people. It is astounding to discover God delights *in us!*
- God's people are incredibly valuable to God. You may not feel loved or valued by anyone in your life, but God loves you and delights in you, not only because you were made in his image *but also* because you have been redeemed by Christ, that is if you've embraced him as the Lord of your life.
- **You are a treasure to God!** Some of you find that really hard to believe.
- But isn't this a cure for our insecurities: we have dignity, worth, and acceptance because God says we are his treasure, his gloriously rich inheritance. This is so much better than a self-esteem, self-help, make you feel better for a few days kind of system.
- Properly received, this can provide inextinguishable confidence and joy.

Trans: So the first two ingredients Paul wants us to see are the hope of our calling and the riches of God's inheritance in us. We covered those rather quickly, because I want us to pitch our tent on the third component found in verses 19-23. These verses bring us to our second and final point.

II. Live with the unlimited power God gives to those who believe (1:19-23).

- Paul provides the most detail on this third component possibly because it deals with our present need more than the others.
- Verse 19 tells us he wants us to know: *"what is the immeasurable greatness (some translations say "surpassing greatness; others say "incredible greatness") of his power toward us who believe according to the working of his great might"*
- Paul uses the strongest words he can find to help us see the unlimited power of God. It's as if he cannot stack enough terms to communicate the depths of this power.
- Taken together they refer to the overwhelming power of God to effect change in us and through us.
- *"immeasurable greatness. of his power . . . according to the working of his great might."* Does that work for you? Does that get the job done?
- To strengthen his argument further Paul moves quickly to show us where this power was most impressively on display. *Verse 20.*

"[this immeasurable great power toward us to who believe according to the working of his great might] (verse 20) that he worked in Christ (you ready for this?) when he raised him from the dead"

- Are you kidding me? Did you catch that? The power he is praying we would know in us is the same power that raised Jesus from the dead. Pick yourself up off the floor. Seriously. This truth should shock us in the best possible way.
- If you are IN CHRIST, God has placed his powerful Spirit in you, the same Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead. Do you live with this power?
- In some of his last words to his followers, Jesus said: **"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."** (Acts 1:8)
- Paul continues to elaborate on this power in verse 20. It also *"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."* (Ephesians 1:19-23)
 - So this power available to us raised Jesus from the dead, caused him to ascend to the right hand of God where he presently reigns over all things.
 - This power causes Jesus to dominate all other spiritual forces.
 - And, to take that one step further, it causes Jesus' name to be elevated above all other names . . . forever. Jesus has absolutely no rivals!
 - And just to make sure he covered everything, Paul says, "Everything is under his feet." He is over all things.
 - Finally, and I love this, Jesus is the "head of the church." He leads his people with all authority. This is why Redemption Hill Church in Medfid, MA can have great confidence as we go about God's mission.

Trans: You say, "You're talking all of this theology... What does this have to do with me?" Look back at verse 19: "the immeasurable greatness of his power [is] toward us who believe" It is available to us.

- This is staggering and holds ginormous potential to transform the way we live our lives day by day.

1. **All of the resources of God are available to us!**

- Paul is not praying they would receive new power. He is asking that they know the power they already possess!
- Peter puts it like this: **"His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence," (2 Peter 1:3)**
- This power enables us to live life to God's glory and helps us become progressively more and more like Christ.
- What seems beyond you? My spiritual life is pretty good but I'll never _____. Have a Consistent devotional life. Be bold in my witness for Jesus... Be a great dad... Have patience with my roommate, patience with my kids. Get *too* involved with my church. Make it through this trial. Be in a position to mentor someone else to better follow Christ. Be used by God to impact the world. Why not?
- Did Jesus rise from the dead? Did it take the power of God to make that happen? Is that power in you? Yes. Yes. Yes.
- All of the resources of God are available to us. Consequently...

2. **This truth leaves us without excuse.**

- "But I can't..." "But it's so hard..." Listen, the gospel can free us from any struggle, any temptation, any addiction, any trial. If Jesus overcame sin & death for us, would we be so foolish to think he lacks the resources to help us through the greatest battles in our life?
- *There is no sin Christ cannot conquer, and no fruit that he cannot produce in us. Got it?*
- *We are more than conquerors in Christ.*

T: Now, be careful to not forget this one thing: We must pray for this. We cannot muster this power up in our own strength. That is why we must ask God to open the eyes of our hearts to see this power that is available to us and at work in us. We have to see it with the eyes of faith and live off it moment by moment.

Conclusion:

Are you living with the immeasurable greatness of his power? If not, why not? I know we doubt it at times. That's why we need to know it more deeply. We struggle to depend on it. That's why we need to know it more intimately.

Jim Elliot wrote a piercing challenge to live with this power about 60 years ago. He said: **"We are so utterly ordinary, so commonplace, while we profess to know a Power the Twentieth Century does not reckon with. . . . We are spiritual pacifists, non-militants, conscientious objectors in this battle-to-the-death with principalities and powers in high places. Meekness must be had for contact with men, but brass, outspoken boldness is required to take part in the comradeship of the Cross. We are "sideliners" -- coaching and criticizing the real wrestlers while content to sit by and leave the enemies of God unchallenged. The world cannot hate us; we are too much like its own. Oh that God would make us dangerous!" - Jim Elliot**

- What is he saying? Get in the game. Live a life reflective of the truths you profess. Know that spiritual opposition faces every Christian, but that is no reason to cower back. It is every reason to take up arms and hold out God's powerful Word to a world who desperately needs it. Let's throw away our apathy and make a real difference for God.
- Remember, God brings us on his team so that we can be participants, not passengers.
- I love what he says . . . When you are engaged in God's mission, you don't really have much time to criticize others.
- But then how he ends, is such a phenomenal prayer to pray: "Oh that God would make us dangerous!"

- What does a powerful, dangerous life look like? Not fireworks... its' the thousands of little moments, the thousands of little decisions that demonstrate you belong to God. Putting others before ourselves. Speaking a word of encouragement. Speaking out in boldness to bring someone the truth of the cross and empty tomb of Jesus. Saying no to sin a hundred times a day and yes to godliness.
- Are you living a spiritually anemic life, or are you living in the power God supplies? Jesus died & rose again that our lives might be fueled with his power.
- God takes ordinary people and fills them with *his extraordinary power*.
- And why? **"For we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us." (2 Corinthians 4:7)**
- Ordinary people, filled with an extraordinary power so that we might show the world our extraordinary God.

Pray: So I think we should conclude by taking a moment to pray like Paul prayed.