

Mustard Seed

God’s Power Perfected in Our Weakness

Josh Lundberg

“I must go on boasting. Though there is nothing to be gained by it, I will go on to visions and revelations of the Lord. I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows. And I know that this man was caught up into paradise—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows—and he heard things that cannot be told, which man may not utter. On behalf of this man I will boast, but on my own behalf I will not boast, except of my weaknesses— though if I should wish to boast, I would not be a fool, for I would be speaking the truth; but I refrain from it, so that no one may think more of me than he sees in me or hears from me. So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited. Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong. 2 Corinthians 12:1-10

Who is behind this attack on Paul? The text clearly indicates that satanic forces are in play (“a messenger of Satan to harass me”). What was Satan’s motivation? Was he trying to prevent Paul “from becoming conceited?” Doesn’t Satan revel in the idea of a believer becoming conceited? There is where we have, in my opinion, an inside look at spiritual warfare. We don’t fully know Satan’s plan here, but we can surmise he is looking to thwart God’s work in Paul’s life. By oppressing Paul, Satan seeks to put him on his heels, maybe like Elijah was after God’s demonstration of power over the prophets of Baal (1 Kings 18-19).

It is an understatement to call Satan intelligent. His intelligence far exceeds ours. We think we have Satan’s tactics figured out. It makes sense to us that Satan would attack us when we are most vulnerable. But the question is, when are we the most vulnerable? From a human standpoint, we are most vulnerable when we are tired, overworked, have great challenges, etc., but the more we learn about our spiritual lives, the more we are aware of the challenge we have when we feel strong, rested, and under control. **God knows when we are most vulnerable. It is most likely when we are to be self-reliant.**

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- Isn’t God amazing?!
- God provides the power we need for anything that we will walk through in life.
- Never forget: Satan is powerful, but God is almighty!

God's Power Perfected in Our Weakness (Cont. from page 1)

Satan's assault on believers is described as a wrestling match. Paul writes, "For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places" (Eph. 6:12). ***While Paul states, "we do not wrestle with flesh and blood," frequently that is not the case. Too often we are wasting our energy conflicting with people instead of bearing with them, loving them, and bearing their burdens (thus "fulfilling the law of Christ").*** While we burn our energy inefficiently, as a spirit being, Satan and his host do not seem to have a shortage of energy. Satan does not work on our twenty-four hour clock. Paul hints at this with the use of the present tense. Our wrestling with spiritual wickedness is continual. This is truly a wearing task.

In this text, Satan appears to be seeking to bring Paul into despair; God is at work in him. Rather than run, like Elijah, Paul sought the Lord in prayer. Paul did not like what he was experiencing. He sought rescue. God's plan for his rescue was quite different from what Paul would

have chosen. Rather than causing the "devil to flee," God allowed the demonic oppression to continue because it is in the face of our desperation that we no longer rely upon our own resources. God told Paul, "***My grace is sufficient for you.***" When we come to the end of our own resources, we are finally able to experience the power of God.

Satan tries to bring us to weakness so we will be frustrated and quit. God allows us to experience weakness so we will experience His grace. Our soul, in these moments, will learn to echo the words of Paul, "Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong."

As we continue to consider what Satan is trying to accomplish as he wrestles against us, we should be encouraged as we recognize what God is accomplishing in the process. Never forget: Satan is powerful, but God is almighty!

Library Notes

Shirley Hochstedler, Librarian

Sometimes 'old' books are the best! If you haven't read C. S. Lewis, or would like to read some of his works, you can check out three of his classics, *The Great Divorce*, *The Screwtape Letters*, and *Mere Christianity*. A collection of E. M. Bounds books on prayer is also available, entitled *E. M. Bounds on Prayer*. All are great reads!

New books in the Christian Living section include *True North*, by Gary Inrig; *Heaven Touching Earth* by James Scott Bell; *Reinventing Aging* by Shirley Yoder Brubaker; *Intimate Moments With God* by Linda Shephard & Eva Anderson; and *Brokenness* by Nancy Leigh DeMoss. And don't miss *Lesbia, Mother of Mosquitia*, by Harvey Yoder, a true tale about the way God changes lives.

New fiction books include a local author, *Through a Glass Darkly* by Kay Thomann. Also some of your favorite authors are included in this list. A Moment in

Time and A Sensible Arrangement by Tracie Peterson, and a trilogy by Francine Rivers—*A Voice in the Wind*, *An Echo in the Darkness*, and *As Sure as the Dawn*. Also look for *Miracle at the Higher Grounds Café* by Max Lucado; *The Gaius Diary* by Gene Edwards; and *I Read It in the Wordless Book* by Betty Smartt Carter.

Youth books include a series of eight books by Wanda Brunstetter. These are about Rachel Yoder, a nine year old Amish girl in Lancaster County, PA. She is always finding some trouble to get into! Your kids will love it!

And look for the new picture books and read to me books for the little ones. There is always something good happening in our library. Stop in and check out something good to read! You'll be glad you did!



In Pursuit

Dawn Wyse

Spring is one of the busiest times of the year for me. This is because I add working in the greenhouse to my job. Even though it takes extra time and energy, I appreciate it for a couple of different reasons. One, I enjoy working with plants, and two, it gives me time to reflect on God and His Word. It is a positive thing in my life and this year is has become more precious to me than ever before, because it has helped me to work on not only talking to God but on listening to Him. I have found that when I listen for God, I deal better with the ups and downs that come my way.

This Spring I have been a lot more aware of the challenges that are facing those around me and it hits me straight in the heart. I see family struggles, health issues, and emotional pain. I see businesses struggling, broken relationships and churches divided. It's sometimes enough to make me want to curl up into a ball and weep. This is a broken, sinful world that we live in and every one of us is touched by its brokenness in one way or another. We need to be aware of this brokenness, but I don't believe that God wants us to fixate on it. God wants our eyes fixed solidly on Him.

For the past week, I have been thinking about what God wanted me to write about this month. I had been praying about it and still nothing was coming to me. I was starting to get quite frustrated because I knew my deadline was quickly approaching. Last night, I decided that I was going to believe that God would give me the words and I needed to quit stewing over it. When I woke up this morning God showed me how He has been giving me small pieces of what to write over the last week, but just hadn't opened my eyes to see it until today. God was answering my prayer all along, but was waiting for the perfect moment to show me so that I could grow closer to Him through the process. Isn't God amazing?! So here's what God showed me.

It started with a quote by A.W. Tozer I have posted on my mirror. "Power means ability to do. . . And you shall receive ability to do. It will come on you. If you are a soul winner, you will have the ability to save souls. If you are a preacher, He will give you the ability to make the Word plain. Whatever you do in the name of God, He gives you

the ability to do. He gives you the ability to be victorious in your life, to live right, to behold Jesus, and to live with heaven in view. It is ability to do." I hadn't read this note for a while but I felt compelled to reflect on it today. Then I sat down to read the book Spiritual Leadership by J.Oswald Sanders. In it he said, "God delights to lead people, and then in response to their trust, to show them power that matches every impossible situation." That's when I knew my topic for this month, God's power.

You see, it is a foregone conclusion that each one of us will both, face difficult times and walk through difficult times with those around us. However, as

Christians we know that we can face these things with our own weakness because God will come beside us with His unlimited power. Knowing this will give us the confidence to not fixate on the negative thing that is happening but to focus on God and how He has the ability to make the impossible happen. There is a way for something positive to come out of the very worst of situations. 2 Corinthians 12:9 supports what Tozer and Sanders were saying.

"But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me." God's power is made perfect in weakness. It is necessary to accept this in order to experience God's power in more of our life.

We are told in Luke 24:49 that the Holy Spirit will clothe us in power. It is this power that can make all the difference in our lives and those around us, but we must keep in mind that this power doesn't come from us or because of what we do in our lives. We are weak. God is power. I like how Paul explains it in Ephesians 3:14-16 **"For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being"** God is the source of power, but we need to be plugged in.

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Kalona Mennonite Church

902 6th St.

P.O. Box 819

Kalona, IA 52247

319-656-2736

Editor: Shirley Hochstedler

Design & Layout: Janice
Hostetler

Articles for the Mustard
Seed may be submitted to
Shirley Hochstedler or
placed in Shirley's church
mailbox.

Congratulations!

*These people have reached a milestone,
50 or more years of marriage, or 80 or more years of life.
Don't forget to send a card!
The addresses are in your church directory.*

Birthday:

June Gingerich ~ June 1

Anniversary:

Otis & Eunice Yoder ~ June 3, 60 years

Ed & Mary Jane Miller ~ June 11, 59 years

Roy & Mollie Miller ~ June 29, 53 years



(In Pursuit cont. from page 3)

It makes me think of electricity. We can have electricity coming to our house and it is there for us to use. But we have to connect to it in order to make use of it. We need to turn on a power button, or plug something in or turn on a breaker switch. It is the same with God's power. First, we need to know it's there, but that's not enough. We need to plug into it. J.Oswald Sanders puts it this way: "Flame turns to embers - the fire needs fresh fuel always". If we desire to have God's power burning within us we need to allow God to fuel the flame. Get in God's Word and ask Him to reveal it to you. Pray to God, not only speaking but also listening. Worship Him. Praise Him. And the list can go on and on. Bottom line is that we need to ask God to provide ways to fuel the power He desires to place in our lives.

God's power is more necessary in our lives than the sun is to all the life on this planet. This is what NASA says about the sun on their history homepage: "Nothing is more important to us on Earth than the Sun. Without the Sun's heat and light, the Earth would be a lifeless ball of ice-coated rock. The Sun warms our seas, stirs our atmosphere, generates our weather patterns, and gives energy to the growing green plants that provide the food and oxygen for life on Earth." If the sun was taken away all life forms would die on earth. Yet we know from Genesis that God created the sun and from Revelation that there will come a time that there will be no need for the sun because the glory of God

will provide. We are in a state of dying as long as we don't have God's power living and active within us.

God provides the power we need for anything that we will walk through in life. This gives me courage as I tend the plants in my greenhouse to boldly speak to God about the things that break my heart and then to listen knowing that in perfect timing He will answer. Interestingly, I have found that I usually have to admit I am powerless in a situation before I can go before God with a fully open heart. Otherwise, part of me thinks I can handle it on my own. The truth is that I can do nothing on my own, but absolutely everything through Christ who strengthens me. (Phil. 4:13)



I encourage you to go before God in weakness. You will find, as I have, that it is the most powerful thing you will ever do. Our God is amazing! Ask God to fuel the power He has place in you. As always, in pursuit...