

Sermon preached at Faith Presbyterian Church, Springfield, Virginia,  
on Sunday, January 17, 1993, by the Rev. W. Graham Smith, D.D.

### **JEREMIAH 32:17**

“Ah, Sovereign Lord, You have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and outstretched arm. Nothing is too hard for You.”

### **GETTING TO KNOW GOD**

#### **(3) God's Power in Your Life**

I read recently that the sun produces more energy in one second than has been used in the history of the world; and that the sun, at its current rate, will be able to burn for another 30 billion years! Now, that's a lot of power. But, it's nothing compared to the power of the Creator Who made the sun.

Jeremiah 32:17 says, “Ah, Sovereign Lord, You have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and outstretched arm. Nothing is too hard for You.” We're talking today about what theologians call the omnipotence of God. God is almighty; He has unlimited power. God never gets tired. Everything He does, He does easily. It's as easy for Him to answer a prayer as it was for Him to create a universe. Luke 18:27 says, “What is impossible with men is possible with God.”

Today I want you to look at three things: (1) The evidence of God's power; (2) the application of God's power to my life; and (3) the appropriation of God's power; that is, how do I get God's power in my life?

**1. The evidence of God's power.** The obvious place to begin is creation because creation is a silent witness to God's power. You can reflect upon the stately majesty of the Himalayan Mountains or the awesomeness of the Grand Canyon of the Colorado River, and you say, “Our great God created it all!”

Look at Psalm 19:1-2 (LB), “The heavens are telling the glory of God; they are a marvelous display of His craftsmanship. Day and night, they keep on telling about God.” How can anyone look up into the star-studded sky at night and not believe in God and in His almighty power? This universe was created at God's sovereign command. He spoke it into existence. In a single word He said, “Let there be light”, and there was light. God said, “Water!”, and immediately there were oceans and lakes and rivers. God said, “Fish!”, and in an instant the oceans were teeming with them. He didn't need to say, “God, haddock, snapper, salmon, etc.” He just said, “Fish”, and every kind appeared. He said, “Vegetation”, and the earth turned green. He said, “Stars!”, and there they were twinkling in the sky! Now, that's what I call “Power”. He spoke the universe into existence. Ps. 33:9 says, “He spoke, and it came to be.”

We see every day, all around us, the evidence of God's power: The seasons come and go in orderly procession; seed time and harvest; the incredible discoveries that He allows mankind to make. Now, if you have a design, you have to have a Designer. Surely it takes more faith not

to believe in God than it does to believe in Him.

Then you look at Jesus' life and how it displayed the power of God:

- Jesus showed His power over nature. He calmed the storm. He spoke to a tree and it withered. He turned water into wine.
- He had power over illness and death. He healed the sick and the diseased. He raised people from the dead.
- He had power over Satan. One time He told a bunch of demons to come out of a man and go into a herd of pigs. I guess that was the original "deviled ham"! God's power is awesome!

Now, the amazing thing is that God wants to share His power with you. So today let's look at some passages of Scripture that tell us about:

**2. How God's power applies to my life.** Look at Ephesians 1:19-20 (LB), "I pray that you will begin to understand how incredibly great His power is to help those who believe in Him. It is that same mighty power that raised Christ from the dead."

Now, that's amazing because it means that God wants to share His power with you. Today we see so many people who are powerless. They feel themselves to be victims of society, or circumstance or heredity. They may feel victimized by their health – they're always "a dollar short and a day late" – one step forward and two steps back. They just can't get it together, and they feel utterly powerless. And, God says, "I want to give you power!"

Let me mention just two areas where God wants to give you power: Power Shortage # 1 – the power to get started. Most of us have a problem with that from time to time. Let me ask you, how many good things have you been postponing during the last six months? – "Oh, I'm going to get around to it, but..." "Some day I'll..." Is there something you would like to change about yourself but you just can't muster up the motivation to get started? Do you ever find yourself paralyzed by procrastination?

Look at Romans 7:18 (Phi), "I often find that I have the will to do good, but not the power." Does that describe you? How many of you have learned that good intentions are not enough? Look at the same verse in the Living Bible, "No matter which way I turn, I can't make myself do right. I want to, but I can't" Sometimes we get stuck in a circle of bad habits, and it's hard to break out of them.

Many times in life, you will face tasks for which you are ill prepared. You don't think you have the ability, the energy, or the power to accomplish them. So, what do you do about those kinds of things where your performance does not seem to match up to what needs to be done?

That's where the good news comes in! The good news is that God can give me the power to perform. When I feel helpless, He's there to help me get started and to make the changes He wants me to make and that I want to make.

Look at Philippians 2:13 (Phi), “For it is God Who is at work within you, giving you the will and the power to achieve His purpose.” God says, “I want to give you the power to get started.”

Power Shortage #2 – The power to keep going. It’s one thing to get started. Many people are great starters; but it’s another thing to keep on doing what you know is right, even when you don’t feel like it.

Many of us can relate to Psalm 6:2-3 (GN), “I am worn out, Oh Lord... Give me strength; I am completely exhausted, and my whole being is deeply troubled.” What David is saying is this – “I’m sick and tired of being sick and tired!”

Everything wears you out eventually. Some of my friends look like ads for Geritol! Well, what do you do when you’re tired? God says, “I want to help you keep on going.”

Look at Ecclesiastes 2:11 (LB). Solomon says, “I looked at everything I had tried; it was all so useless, a chasing of the wind; and there was nothing really worthwhile anywhere.” And, you thought that a “mid-life crisis” was a 20th Century innovation! Solomon was going through a mid-life crisis. Many people today say, “Sometimes I just feel like giving up.”

But the Bible says that God can give me the power to keep on going. The good news is that He can give me the power not only to perform: He can also give me the power to persist.

Look at Isaiah 40:28-31 (GN), “The Lord is the everlasting God... He never grows tired or weary. . . He strengthens those who are weak and tired. . . those who trust in the Lord for help will find their strength renewed...” That’s a great verse! God will give me the power to persist. When I am drained and at the end of my rope, I know that I can tap into a power that is unlimited.

Some of you may be saying, “Doesn’t the Bible tell us that God ‘rested’ after He had finished creating the universe?” Yes, but it’s not the same meaning as our word “rest”. We rest because we’re tired. But, God was not tired. He had just finished His task, and He looked at it all and said, “It is very good!” So, “rest” for God did not mean “restoration”. It just meant “ceasing from creative activity”.

God says, “I want to give you the power to persist. I promise to energize those who trust in Me, so that they can run and not grow weary and walk and not faint.” (Is. 40:31)

Now, I can guess what some of you may be thinking. You’re thinking, “I’m a Christian; I’m saved; but frankly, I’ve never felt God’s power surging through my life.” And, you’re probably exactly right. The fact is – God’s power is not automatic. Indeed, I would say that most Christians do not have God’s power in their life to any appreciable degree. There are some things you must do to appropriate God’s power. So, the question then becomes,

**3. How can you appropriate God’s power in your life?** Let me quickly give you

four ways to receive God's power into your life on a regular consistent basis.

**1. You must admit your lack of power.** You see, our problem is that so often we assume that we can handle anything all on our own, and, we work ourselves into the ground trying to do it. Someone has wisely said, "If you try to burn the candle at both ends, you're not as bright as you think you are!" So, you admit your need for God's power in your life. I often think that we never really begin to grow up until we realize that we can't make it all on our own.

I mentioned "mid-life crisis" a moment ago. Do you know what a mid-life crisis is? It is simply waking up to your limitations and realizing that you cannot control everything. You're not going to reach every goal you set in life. You're not going to make as much money as you may have thought. You are a human being with lots of weaknesses, and you're getting older.

In 2 Cor. 12:9-10 (Phi), Paul reflects upon his "thorn in the flesh", that torturing physical infirmity from which God never saw fit to deliver him. But, look how God's grace enabled Paul to handle it. "God said to me... 'where there is weakness, My power is shown the more completely.' Therefore, I have cheerfully made up my mind to be proud of my weaknesses because that means a deeper experience of the power of Christ... For my very weakness makes me strong in Him." As long as you pretend to be self-sufficient, you short-circuit God's power in your life. So, I admit my weakness – my lack of power.

**2. You must believe in faith.** Folks, the key to personal power in your life is faith. Look at these verses:

Mark 9:23, "Everything is possible for him who believes."

Matthew 9:29, "According to your faith it will be done to you."

Now, if that is true, and it is, let me ask you two vital questions:

- a. What are you expecting God to do in your life? And,
- b. What are you expecting God to do through your life?

Since God has unlimited power, then we should not limit Him by our expectations of Him. So often we expect Him to do so little in us and through us. We limit God by our unbelief. Someone has said that God has given us atomic bomb power, and we live firecracker lives. There is no problem too big for God. There's no request that He can't handle.

Let me tell you this – if a congregation of God's people (such as ours) are in the center of His will, then He can provide two million dollars to them just as easily as He can provide two hundred thousand. So then, the issue really becomes – my faith. How much am I willing to believe God for? This truth is so important and so relevant for us as we prepare to build our new church premises in Kingstowne. If we want to see God's power at work in our lives, then we must believe, in faith.

**3. You must speak in faith.** Look at 2 Cor. 4:13 (GN), "The Scripture says, 'I spoke because I believed.' In the same spirit of faith, we also speak because we believe." You see, you

must verbalize your faith. You must announce what you believe God is going to do. That's what a goal is. A goal is a verbalized statement of faith. When I set a goal, I'm saying, "I believe God will help me do such and such by such and such a time." Goals are simply statements of faith. The size of your goal is determined by the size of your God! Show me what your goals are in life, and I will tell you how much you are believing God for.

What goals do you have for Faith Church during the next five years?

- a substantial suite of buildings completed?
- at least 500 members?
- programs that will minister to the needs of Kingstowne and vicinity?
- a Christian school?

It is very important to announce your goals up front.

You say it, in faith. You see, the Bible says in James 3:4-5 that your tongue is the rudder of your life – just like a little rudder steers a giant ship. The way you talk to yourself and others directs the course of your life, Proverbs 18:21 says that "the tongue has the power of life and death."

So then, my question to you is this – What are you saying about your marriage? What are you saying about your job? What are you saying about your health? What are you saying about your finances? What are you saying about your children?

You see, many people are waiting for God to do something. They are believing in Him for a miracle, but they are short circuiting it by the way they talk. You're believing over here, but then you're denying it by complaints. Someone says, "Oh, I believe God is going to save my marriage, but my marriage is the pits!" "Yes, I'm praying that my children will take a stand for the Lord, but my children exasperate me." "I'm really praying that God will heal me, but you know, I'm never going to get well." "Yes, I believe God has the power to change me and rid me of bad habits; but you know, that's just the way I am. I'm never going to change!" You are short-circuiting God's power in your life by your mouth!

As I said before, God's power is not bestowed on us automatically. You must first admit that you have a need for it; then you believe in faith; and then you speak in faith because nothing is too hard for God. Then,

**4. You must act in faith.** Now, let me explain this because it is vital, and most people miss this point. You act in faith. That means that you step out in advance before the power is released. You've got to act as if you had the power in order to get the power. It's called "acting in faith." You act in the assurance that God is going to provide. When you step out in advance, God sees your faith, and He will honor it. You do not wait for a "feeling" as some people do. "You know, I'm waiting for a feeling, and then I'll join a Bible Study group." "I'm waiting for the Lord's leading, and then I'm going to tithe." "I'm waiting for the opportune time to witness to that person at work."

Well, if you're waiting for a "feeling" or "the opportune time", the devil will make sure that feeling and that time will never come! Immaturity is living by your feelings. Maturity is living by your commitments.

So, you act "as if". You act in advance. Perhaps there's something you've always wanted to do for the Lord, but you don't think you can do it so you never even try, and the result is – you never have the power. Whereas, if you had tried, God would have poured the power into your life to make you competent to do it, provided it was within His will for you.

You remember how Joshua and the children of Israel came up to the Jordan River, ready to cross over into the Promised Land. It was harvest time and the banks of the Jordan were overflowing. But, God said to Joshua, "Command the priests to carry the Ark of the Covenant on their shoulders down into the river, After they begin to walk into the river, I will miraculously dam it up, and you will all be able to walk across on dry ground." So, into the river went those priests in their long robes, and we read, "As soon as their feet touched the water's edge, the water from upstream stopped flowing. It piled up in a heap. . . the priests who carried the Ark... stood firm on dry ground in the middle of the Jordan while all Israel passed by until the whole nation had completed the crossing on dry ground." (Joshua 3:15-17)

You see, they acted as if the water would part, and it did! God released His power. God wants to release His power in your life, but you have to follow the steps. Admit you have the need; believe in faith; speak in faith; and then you act in faith.

Many of you may be waiting for God to perform a miracle in some area of your life. You think that you are waiting on God, when in reality God is waiting on you to take the first step. The power will not be released until you take the first step. So, you say, "This is the right thing to do, and with God helping me, I'm going to do it."

Now, let me give you an example. Men, tomorrow when you come home from work exhausted; and you just want to be let alone; and you don't want to face your children, or maybe even your wife; you want to walk in the door and say, "Don't bug me. I'm tired!" Instead of doing that, try this – While you're driving home, why don't you swallow a little pill called Isaiah 40:31 which says, "Those who wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength. They shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall play with their kids and not faint!" And, before you open the front door, say out loud, "Lord, You've promised to re-energize me if I wait on You. So, I'm waiting, and taking a deep breath, and I believe in faith that You will energize me. I'm going to say it, and I'm going to act as if I have 92-octane in my tank, and I'm going to play with those kids, because I don't have many hours in the day with them in the first place."

Here's something else. Think of that person you find it hard to be patient with. Please don't look at them right now or give them the elbow! Or, think of that person at work who irritates you, and you don't even like. Now say, "How would a loving person act toward that person?" Then start acting as if you are patient; acting as if you are friendly, or whatever. Then watch what happens! That's living by faith and acting in faith. You see, feelings always follow actions, not vice versa. "Lord, by faith I want to feel this way, and so I'm going to act this way."

And, watch what happens!

What good is God's power if you're not taking advantage of it?

- So, admit your lack of power. Admit that you need God. Then,
- Believe, in faith; and
- Speak in faith; and then
- Act in faith even with the thing seems impossible

Your life will never be the same again!

**AMEN.**