

You've Got THE Power

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Feast of Tabernacles

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What we are going to talk about is something that we can all see others exercise in society today and we can see it throughout the course of human history. It's something we're all cautious of, suspicious of even, yet at the same time it's something that we're willing to bestow, desire to give to others sometimes with scant justification and at times in the end to our own detriment. It's also something we all want, some of us at any cost. Now obtaining this something has been the fodder of many famous or maybe more accurately infamous thinkers throughout time and in the words of one of these modern individuals can be attained by adhering to some of the following principles.

Things like conceal your intentions. Court attention at all cost. Get others to do the work for you, but always take the credit. Use selective honesty and generosity to disarm your victim. You have to love the relationship that's quantified in terms of victimhood. How about this? Pose as a friend, work as a spy. Keep others in suspended terror. Cultivate an air of unpredictability. Play a sucker to catch a sucker. Seem dumber than your mark, again another great way to quantify a relationship. One that may strike home to some is play on people's need to believe to create a cult-like following.

These are just a few of The 48 Laws of Power. That's the name of a book written by an individual named Robert Greene. In its own words on the back jacket it says "for those who want power, watch power or want to arm themselves against power".

So we're going to talk about power this morning. It's a force feared, loathed, desired, regretted, abused and misunderstood since before mankind was even on the scene. In the context of our modern American political circumstance the exercise of power, much in the spirit of some of these 48 laws, has created dramatic polarization in our society and our relationships with other nations in the world. In the context of the modern iterations of the greater churches of God power, the misuse and abuse thereof, has been the source of many disfellowshippings, fracturing of groups, wrecked interpersonal relationships, wrecked marriages and the dissemination of heresy and false doctrine which in turn shatters faith. If you shatter faith, what do you ultimately shatter? You're shattering the relationship that that individual has with God the Father and Jesus Christ. So it's no wonder then that power and those that have authority or in one way or another can exercise power are often at least looked at with a little doubt and trepidation, if not outrightly disdained or persecuted. While negative and hurtful attitudes as responses to these abuses are never justifiable, it's certainly understandable considering the damage that's been done.

While some may claim concepts like power to the people and we gotta stick it to the man, we gotta stand up for our rights; human beings actually have an interesting psychological conundrum involved here. It's one that's aptly captured in the title of a book written by Dr. Dacher Keltner. The title of Dr. Keltner's book is The Power Paradox. I haven't read the book, not saying go out and read it. I have read Dr. Keltner's abstract on his concepts and research. The essence of the book is that human beings give power to those who demonstrate an interest in the greater good or an interest in taking care of those individuals' needs. There's a problem here though. The trouble is that human beings don't deal very well with having power and that empowerment often leads to what amounts to in the sociopathic behavior, really the exact opposite of what those individuals were looking for in the first place that empowered that individual, hence the paradox. Now this paradox is one that those in the psychology community have a lot of research going into it, a lot of debate. They have a very difficult time coming to a consensus as to what the answer to the paradox is. One fact through decades of research has been substantiated. That is this degradation of behavior, this movement, you empower somebody and it kind of goes to their head and they kind of go crazy. This behavior over time is nearly inevitable and not only nearly inevitable but if it's encouraged, reinforced, rewarded in any way, shape or form that that sociopathic end state is intensified. It kind of proves that adage. I think we all know the saying that absolute power corrupts absolutely. That's been pretty much substantiated.

Now we certainly don't need to look into these scientific studies to see this paradox in action, because we have a textbook in all of our laps that we can look to and find examples of this. I'd like to take a look at a case study here just briefly to see this in action. Turn to 1 Samuel 8:4-5 please. My default Biblical translation is the New American Standard Bible. We are going to read from several different translations in this sermon. We are breaking into the story here a bit regarding Samuel and his sons.

1 Samuel 8:4. *Then all the elders of Israel came together and came to Samuel at Ramah;*
5) and they said to him, "Behold, you have grown old, and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now appoint a king for us to judge us like all the nations." (NASU)

Again, if you look at the context of the first three verses and what they respond in verse 5, you could argue that Samuel's sons were the catalyst certainly for this request, but notice how the people respond later in the chapter. Go down to verses 19-20. So, God through Samuel responds to this request and here's their counterpoint to what God has to say.

19) Nevertheless, the people refused to listen to the voice of Samuel, and they said, "No, but there shall be a king over us,
20) that we also may be like all the nations, that our king may judge us and go out before us and fight our battles." (NASU)

That's interesting. So, what do we see here? We see this power paradox starting to take shape; human beings wanting to bestow power on another human being who's going to what? Well, they are going to fight our battles. They are going to look out for our interests, our greater good. Little do they know that they have the greatest King in the universe looking out for their greater good, but in their short sightedness they asked of Samuel this request. What does God through Samuel tell the people is actually going to happen? We are not going to take the time to go through it, but in verses 10-17 here we see God clearly stating that the king is going to take more than they bargained for. In the end if we read the first part of verse 18:

18) "Then you will cry out in that day because of your king whom you have chosen for yourselves ..." (NASU)

I've read the end of the book and it ends badly for them by making this choice. Now we all know how this story ends, but along the way we have milestones and the experience of King Saul that show this degradation of behavior. We are going to whirlwind through these examples. It is in 1 Samuel 14, a very clear example. We have this curse that's put on any man who would eat before the Philistines were routed in battle. You can see that in verse 24.

1 Samuel 14:24. Now the men of Israel were hard-pressed on that day, for Saul had put the people under oath, saying, "Cursed be the man who eats food before evening, and until I have avenged myself on my enemies." So none of the people tasted food. (NASU)

Not only was this debilitating, as his son Jonathan points out in verse 30.

30) "How much more, if only the people had eaten freely today of the spoil of their enemies which they found! For now the slaughter among the Philistines has not been great." (NASU)

It led to the men eventually sinning by eating meat that still had the blood in it because they were so hungry. They had the day. They had the victory. They grabbed the spoils and dug in. You see that in verses 31-33.

*31) They struck among the Philistines that day from Michmash to Aijalon. And the people were very weary.
32) The people rushed greedily upon the spoil, and took sheep and oxen and calves, and slew them on the ground; and the people ate them with the blood.
33) Then they told Saul, saying, "Behold, the people are sinning against the Lord by eating with the blood." And he said, "You have acted treacherously; roll a great stone to me today." (NASU)*

Upon finding out his son Jonathan had actually eaten something and he wasn't deliberately disobeying but he hadn't gotten the word as it were, as you see in verse 27.

27) But Jonathan had not heard when his father put the people under oath; therefore, he put out the end of the staff that was in his hand and dipped it in the honeycomb, and put his hand to his mouth, and his eyes brightened. (NASU)

Saul vowed to kill his own son over what, a mouth full of honey. Really? Fortunately the men of the army came to Jonathan's rescue with a bit of rational thinking. We see that in verse 45.

45) But the people said to Saul, "Must Jonathan die, who has brought about this great deliverance in Israel? Far from it! As the Lord lives, not one hair of his head shall fall to the ground, for he has worked with God this day." So the people rescued Jonathan and he did not die. (NASU)

One of the clearest examples of the irrational and sociopathic behavior of Saul has to be the constant mistrust and vengeful aggression towards David. We all know the story. We're not going to go through it here. The key to not only what happened to Saul, and really the answer to why this power paradox exists in the first place I think is neatly summed in 1 Samuel 16:14 from the New Living Translation.

1 Samuel 16:14. *Now the Spirit of the Lord had left Saul, and the Lord sent a tormenting spirit that filled him with depression and fear. (NLT)*

We read here that the Lord was the One who orchestrated this taking place, but who ultimately is the source of torment? Who is the source of depression? Who is the source of fear? What spirit has been at the center of casting doubt into the hearts and minds of mankind since the very beginning? Well, Genesis 3:1 uses the term the serpent. Ephesians 2:2 says the prince of the power of the air. Revelation 20:2 encapsulates this being pretty well as the dragon that serpent of old who is the devil and Satan.

Now we were fashioned in the Creator's image and likeness. In the last part Genesis 1:26 and verse 28 not only are we created in their likeness, but we are created with capabilities and responsibilities to do what - to exercise power and to exercise authority. However, once the decision was made to take of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil this power paradox, this issue was created as influenced by Satan and his desire for ultimate power and ultimate authority.

Okay, great Tom we have this paradox. We know what the source is. What's the answer? I mention the secular research and studies and some of the modern science earlier, less as a foundation for what I am sharing with you today, but rather it's evidence that mankind sees problems but has no answers, no solutions. Psychology would have us looking into things like self-actualization or being more socially intelligent or improving your E.Q., your emotional quotient or just be nice. Just get along and everything will be okay. Be more socially engaged. Get out there and be smiling and

happy. These things in and of themselves are not wrong. I'm not saying don't be nice. Please be nice. None of these over time are sustainable. These aren't answers. Now why do I say that? It's because we've had six thousand years to give it our best go and what has happened? We've failed epically and we will continue as mankind to fail all the way up to the time that we're here picturing now, the time of the Millennium.

The time of the Millennium, amongst many other aspects will represent what? It's going to represent a shift in power, isn't it? Power is going to shift from Ephesians 2:2, the prince of the power of the air to what we read in Isaiah 11:9-10 from the New King James Version.

Isaiah 11:9. *They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.*

10) "And in that day there shall be a Root of Jesse, who shall stand as a banner to the people; for the Gentiles shall seek Him, and His resting place shall be glorious." (NKJV)

Again verse 9 is very familiar. There's going to be permeation of God's way of life on earth. In the context of what we are covering in this sermon what I think is interesting is what it actually says in verse 10. Notice that this isn't going to be a light switch. We read in Zechariah 14:17-19 that it's not going to be automatic, but there will be a desire to be led, a desire for what? We see this at the end of verse 10 this glorious resting place. This is the Innate desire to bestow power and authority to another in his care, the right one, the Root of Jesse as we read here in verse 10, who has their absolute best interest in mind.

We understand that as those God is working with in this age if we endure to the end as it were. We will have a part to play in this process. Turn please to Revelation 20:6 from the Amplified Bible, because it brings out some nuances in some of these words that I think is very interesting and appropriate.

Revelation 20:6. *Blessed, happy, to be envied and holy, spiritually whole ... (AMP)*

So these individuals that are participating, that are being described here are complete. They're spiritually whole.

6b) ... of unimpaired and proved virtue. ... (AMP)

How do you prove something? Well, time, experience are good ways to prove something. Hold onto that, because we're going to kind of tease that out a bit.

6 continued) ... is the person who takes part, shares in the first resurrection. Over them the second death exerts no power or authority but they shall be ministers of God and Christ, the Messiah ... (AMP)

So, they are given responsibilities.

6 continued) ... and they shall rule ... (AMP)

This is authority here, power.

6 continued) ... along with Him a thousand years. (AMP)

This time we're here celebrating today, this Feast of Tabernacles, gives us the glimpse of the time to come in which we will be, as we read, spiritually whole and empowered to rule with Jesus Christ during this time. Over the course of our lives we are to be growing into this role. Again, think prove, time, experience. The question is how? We live in a world that is electrified with Satan's influence. We're surrounded by countless examples of how not to exercise power. We've even been conditioned, as it says in 2 Peter 2:10 to despise authority.

2 Peter 2:10. *and especially those who indulge the flesh in its corrupt desires and despise authority. (NASU)*

We kind of have our own power paradox don't we? We are to be growing into this role, but we have these conflicting forces in action.

Brethren, there's some good news here. We've got THE power and it's not from being nice, though again do be nice. It's not from being self-actualized. It's not from having a high E.Q. What is it from? Turn to 2 Timothy 1:6-7 from the New King James Version. This is the bedrock verses of what we're sharing here.

2 Timothy 1:6. *Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God ... (NKJV)*

We didn't earn it, don't deserve it. It's a gift.

6b) ... which is in you through the laying on of my hands. (NKJV)

We are going to come back to process, so just hold onto that thought.

7) For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind. (NKJV)

My focus today is really the essence of verse 6. I'd like to spend our time in this sermon on reminding all of us of this tremendous gift that we've all been given, which as it says here in verse 7 one of its core attributes is power, love and a sound mind. Specifically, we're going to talk about how this power is manifested to us, what our expectations should be in this life with this gift and how we can identify and be more aware of this power within us, which is vital to our attaining the roles of kings and priests, or as we

read from Revelation 20:6 in the Amplified Version, as ministers of God and of Jesus Christ.

First off for the sake of stating the obvious, power in the context of our calling is not about being powerful from the onset. Rather it's about being empowered through being powerless. I know many of you have your own experiences in this respect in your initial calling. Many God has given the opportunity to in this life were called at points in their lives when perhaps they were in crisis or perhaps they were at a major decision crossroads in life and God decided to step in, make Himself known and then bring you into this process of calling and conversion. Even if perhaps your calling didn't have maybe a level of drama that others have had, we can all relate to what it says in 1 Corinthians 1:26-28 from the Bible in Basic English. These are very familiar verses here; no surprises.

1 Corinthians 1:26. *For you see God's design for you, my brothers, that he has not taken a great number of the wise after the flesh, not the strong, not the noble: (BBE)*

It's not the hotshots, not the super smart, right?

27) But God made selection of the foolish things of this world so that he might put the wise to shame; and the feeble things that he might put to shame the strong; 28) And the low things of the world, and the things without honour, did God make selection of, yes, even the things which are not, so that he might make as nothing the things which are: (BBE)

Again, this is very familiar, no surprises here. I think we tend to overlook though a key reality that these verses state. Yes, we're the weak. Yes, we're the base. Yes, we're the foolish, but the point of these verses brethren is that we have been given the power to not remain that way. It's been my experience speaking as a Gen 2 Christian growing up in the church, we tend to fall into one of two ditches in this particular concept, this perspective. We have the Revelation 3 Laodicean era rich and increased in goods. We have it all figured out. We have all truth. It's all locked in. We're set. We're done. It's a sealed deal, good to go. Or we have the other ditch. We read 1 Corinthians 1 here and say well, I'm weak and base and foolish and therefore I'm worthless. We feel like what's the point, what's the use? In each of these ditches what's the operative pronoun? It's I; me, me, me, me, I, I, I, I. Notice again in 1 Corinthians 1 – He might put, He might make. It's not our job to do the putting and the making. That's His job. We start in this state at the bottom as it were; weak, base, foolish, but we're to move to shame what is perceived as powers in the world today. We're going to explore this more shortly, but the point that I'm trying to bring out here is our calling, what we're given in our calling, this power we've been given gives us capabilities in our lives today, now.

Before we get to that how exactly are we empowered? What does that mean? Turn to Acts 1:8, the first half. It is kind of breaking into a thought here, but it really stitches together the point that I'm trying to get across here. Christ is giving instruction and laying out what is going to transpire to His disciples. He says:

Acts 1:8. *But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you;” ... (NKJV)*

So the very power of God, the holy spirit empowers us. It gives us power and here shortly we're going to dive deeper into what exactly it provides us with. For now again I want to drive home that this capability has been given to us in the spirit and that we have access to this power in our lives now. We don't need to wait. Turn to Ephesians 1:13-14 from the New King James Version.

Ephesians 1:13. *In Him you also trusted ... (NKJV)*

Hold onto that concept of trust.

13b) ... after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed ... (NKJV)

Hold onto that. We've got trust. We've got belief.

13 continued) ... you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, 14) who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory. (NKJV)

What I'd like to do is read verse 14 from a couple different translations. I'm not going to put any commentary in here. Just let it sink in as we read through these words. First from the Amplified Version:

14) That spirit is the guarantee of our inheritance, the firstfruits, the pledge and foretaste, the down payment on our heritage in anticipation of its full redemption and our acquiring complete possession of it to the praise of His glory. (AMP)

Verse 14 from the New Living Translation reads this way.

14) The Spirit is God's guarantee that he will give us the inheritance he promised and that he has purchased us to be his own people. He did this so we would praise and glorify him. (NLT)

Okay. Here are a couple of questions then. What's our inheritance? Turn to 1 Peter 1:3-5 from the New Living Translation. We're given this down payment, this pledge, this guarantee of an inheritance.

1 Peter 1:3. *All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is by his great mercy that we have been born again, because God raised Jesus Christ from the dead. ... (NLT)*

Again, going back to process, so this process has taken place. Christ came. He lived a perfect sinless life, died, and was resurrected. That sacrifice was accepted and it enabled us to have what? It is his holy spirit, that spirit of power.

*3b) ... Now we live with great expectation,
4) and we have a priceless inheritance—an inheritance that is kept in heaven for you, pure and undefiled, beyond the reach of change and decay.
5) And through your faith, God is protecting you by his power ... (NLT)*

This is a source from where? It is the spirit within us.

5b) ... until you receive this salvation, which is ready to be revealed on the last day for all to see. (NLT)

Ah, there we go. Our inheritance brethren is to be born into the very Kingdom of God and revealed as the bride of Christ when He returns. God's spirit is given to us as a guarantee, a pledge, a promise that He is going to be true to that. The question for us becomes then we have this tremendous power within us, a power that we're told in scripture can enable us to move beyond being the weak and the base and the foolish. At the risk of sounding maybe a little abrupt what's our problem? Maybe what's my problem? Why do I continue to stumble? Why do I continue to fail? Why do I continue to fall short? I have been hinting at this a little bit as we've been going along, but Christ's response to this situation in which his disciples could not cast a demon out of a possessed boy sums this up pretty clearly. Turn to Matthew 17:19-20 from the New Living Translation. We're going to just catch the end of the account here. Again, the disciples were approached. There was a demon possessed boy. They couldn't get the demon out. Christ is approached. The demon is removed. We pick up the story in verse 19.

Matthew 17:19. *Afterward the disciples asked Jesus privately, "Why couldn't we cast out that demon?"
20) "You don't have enough faith," Jesus told them. "I tell you the truth, if you had faith even as small as a mustard seed, you could say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it would move. Nothing would be impossible." (NLT)*

It's pretty amazing if you really stop and think about that. Is it Faith in what - in our own power, our own capabilities or the power of God within us? Is Christ just speaking in a hyperbole here? Well, that would frankly seem pretty out of character. Again, when we look at the Bible we see amazing examples of amazing things taking place. How about walking on water, shadows healing people, being relatively unfazed by events that should have been drop dead deadly? The list goes on.

Now were these individuals involved in these circumstances somehow superhuman? Were they fully self-actualized? Maybe they just got a bigger piece of the pie and you know the end times and I am getting a little tiny slice so I can't. I could never, no not me. Brethren what role does faith play in this process. Turn to John 14:12 from the New King James Version. Again, we're going to look at Christ's own words for instruction in this regard. Is this beyond us?

John 14:12. *"Verily, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do ... (NKJV)*

We have a pretty extensive record of the works that Jesus Christ did on this earth; four books pretty extensive.

12b) ... he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father. (NKJV)

This is because Christ went through this process to enable us to have the tool that gives us the power to accomplish. We often quote John 3:34 to state that Christ was given the spirit without measure and he certainly was - no debate there.

John 3:34. *"For He whom God has sent speaks the words of God; for He gives the Spirit without measure." (NASU)*

The question is if the one so empowered could do what he did on earth and say these words right in front of us, black and white, the ball is in our court brethren. Where does that put us? Brethren this is a faith issue. We have the power though and that's the encouraging part here. The question is do we have the faith to use it or do we often pull out the "I was afraid" card? Harkening to the parable of the talents, that last servant when he was confronted to give an accounting for the tool, the resource he was given what was his response? I was afraid. Do we use that response as well?

Now am I saying that we have unfettered access to God's spirit and power in this life? I am not saying that at all. Akin to having exhaustive understanding and insight to God's mind and plan. If we were granted that level of access, likely our heads would literally explode, if they wouldn't literally explode, we would explode in things like pride, idolatry at the very least. On the flip side I feel we tend to short change what we do have access to.

Again, I want to speak from my perspective. My experience in the church growing up in the church is that we can fall into this mentality; okay I'm just going to hunker down. I am going to hide in the corner. I am just going to wait for that phone call for the place of safety and then I'm going to get up and I'm going to run and I'm going to hope in the meantime I just don't screw up. What is behind that mentality? That's a mentality or a spirit of fear.

The reality brethren is that we have direct access to the power that created this universe, the power that guarantees that our lives, that the lives of mankind, that this sick dying world has a hope and a future beyond what we can imagine. We're here celebrating the Feast of Tabernacle that is combined at the end by the Last Great Day. I love the Last Great Day. That's my favorite feast because it pictures the unwritten book, what's going to happen in the vast beyond. It's beyond comprehension and it's wonderful and it's amazing.

With all of this in mind let's bring it back down. Let's speak to some expectations. We have this power. We have governed access if you will. What does having the power of God through the holy spirit mean for us today then? I'm sure this probably goes without saying, but I'll say it anyway. The spirit is not carte blanche. It's not a get out of jail free card.

Why do I say that? It's because I think in our society and, maybe this is just the general human experience, we have these stereotypes of this perspective that if you have power, you have ease. Everything is good and everything is great and everything is wonderful. Again, we have stereotypes like this senior executive. He spends his day out on the golf course or jet setting around in his private jet or hanging out on his yacht drinking champagne. We yearn to reach for that next level, right? If I just had a little more say. If I just had a little more influence then things could be so much better, because I have the answers, right? I know how this should work. If I just was able to be there, I could make that happen.

However, being called and empowered as a member of the God family is on a different path, isn't it? We all know what 1 Corinthians 10:13 says. It gives us encouragement.

1 Corinthians 10:13. *No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it. (NASU)*

It tells us that what we have to endure in this life will not be beyond us or beyond the human experience, but that is tempered with some reality, the reality that Paul experienced and recorded in 2 Corinthians 6. Turn please to 2 Corinthians 6:4-10.

2 Corinthians 6:4. *But in everything commending ourselves as servants of God ... (NASU)*

I think that this goes above and beyond just ministers, elders, teachers, preachers, but we are all servants of God in our own capacities.

4b) ... in much endurance, in afflictions, in hardships, in distresses,

5) in beatings, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in sleeplessness, in hunger, (NASU)

Notice what comes next.

6) in purity, in knowledge, in patience, in kindness, in the Holy Spirit ... (NASU)

Again that's the power that makes these things possible that we are going to continue reading.

6b) ... in genuine love,

7) in the word of truth, in the power of God; by the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and the left, (NASU)

We can in turn expect that with this power that we're going to have the tools and resources again to rise above being weak and base and foolish and exercise these capabilities. We read weapons of righteousness or the armor of God. We have these tools and these resources at our disposal.

8) by glory and dishonor, by evil report and good report; regarded as deceivers and yet true;

9) as unknown yet well-known, as dying yet behold, we live; as punished yet not put to death,

10) as sorrowful yet always rejoicing, as poor yet making many rich, as having nothing yet possessing all things. (NASU)

Really? it says rejoicing, making many rich, possessing all things? Brethren these verses articulate what tapping into the power of God will provide for us. We can take this to the bank that in spite of pain, in spite of suffering that our work, our efforts very specifically in the exercising of the power that we've been given will in and of itself be empowering. So, you have this feedback loop.

Let me give an example here that will hopefully clarify this. Turn to John 4:1-6 please. This is the account of Christ's exchange with the Samaritan woman at the well.

John 4:1. *Therefore when the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John*

2) (although Jesus Himself was not baptizing, but His disciples were),

3) He left Judea and went away again into Galilee.

4) And He had to pass through Samaria.

5) So He came to a city of Samaria called Sychar, near the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph;

6) and Jacob's well was there. So Jesus, being wearied from His journey, was sitting thus by the well. It was about the sixth hour. (NASU)

Now we're all familiar with the account. What I want to do is take a look at the circumstance that's been created here. First off we have Christ and his disciples doing what? They are leaving Judea. They are going to Galilee. Why are they doing this? It's not just a stroll through the park in the afternoon. This was a response to the situation that was developing as the Pharisees were reacting to a shift in power, and the subsequent impact on their influence over the people. In other words you could almost view this as a bit of a defensive move, likely under some level of duress. Secondly, we have the journey in and of itself passing through territory that in the mind of the Jews was hostile; no love lost for Samaritans and in all likelihood traveling for several hours on foot to get to this point. So, Jerusalem to Sychar is a forty mile trip, again not just a stroll through the park. Then there's the biological side; hunger, thirst and it was the sixth hour. Actually, looking into this I found some debate as to whether this was noon or six p.m., but frankly either way if it's noon or six p.m. for me it's time to eat something. In addition, noon, six p.m., that time of day is the hot part of the day. This isn't the cool of the evening or the middle of the night. This is when it's pretty warm out. You take this package of all of this and it all translates into Christ's reaction that we see in verse 6. He was beat. He was tired. The next verses here outline his interaction with that woman at the well. Let's skip down to verses 31-32 and pick the story back up again. This interaction takes place. His disciples come back.

31) Meanwhile the disciples were urging Him, saying, "Rabbi, eat."

32) But He said to them, "I have food to eat that you do not know about." (NASU)

So, the disciples were saying to one another no one brought him anything to eat did they? Notice Christ's response.

34) Jesus said to them, "My food" ... NASU)

What is food? Well, we eat to sustain our lives, right? It provides us with energy. It provides us with the power to operate our bodies biologically. Christ is saying that which empowers me, sustains me, keeps me going;

*34b) ... "is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to accomplish His work."
(NASU)*

Again, he is hot, tired, hungry, and thirsty. He asked the woman at the well for a drink. She dropped her bucket and ran into the day. I don't know if he ever got his drink of water on the run from the Pharisees. Yet, when the disciples said eat something, his reaction was not where have you guys been? I'm starving. Christ was invigorated. He was empowered and he was energized in the exercising of the Father's power and the Father's will. Okay, great Tom. This is Jesus Christ we're talking about. I wouldn't expect anything less.

How about another example then and it's one that we've touched on already. That's the example of Paul. Paul, in my opinion, is really a perfect Biblical case study into what's

possible with the power of God and His spirit in action. Paul by the standard of his day was a power. He was a mover and shaker. We know what he says of himself. He wasn't any slouch; well respected, well educated, pedigree and all of these pieces translating into him being able to have the power and authority to attack the emerging Christian threat to the Jewish world at the time. We know what happens to Paul. I'm not going to go through all of the details. Paul was quite literally stopped in his tracks, struck blind, redirected and re-empowered by God's power. You see that in Acts 9:17.

I just want to explore one example of the power of the spirit invigorating Paul's life, and there are several. Please turn to Acts 14:19-22. We are breaking into this account of Paul and Barnabas in the city of Lystra. You may remember that they come into the city. The lame man is healed. Crowds go wild. In the context of power I think it's interesting that the people of the city were willing to ascribe deity status to Paul and Barnabas because they served their best interests. It's very interesting. With the power paradox in mind where we started, what would be the reaction of most people in that circumstance? Well, Paul and Barnabas did what? They tore their clothes. We see that in verse 14. They pointed back to God the Father as the source of power. Let's read what happens next here.

Acts 14:19. *But Jews came from Antioch and Iconium, and having won over the crowds, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing him to be dead. (NASU)*

This wasn't just a let's slap him around a little bit and see if he changes his tune. No, he was assumed to be dead. Let this sink in for a moment. Paul, through the power of the spirit, comes in. A man is healed, incalculable blessing. He receives accolades from an entire city and on a turn of a moment has rocks hurled at him until his mortality is questioned. If this were you, if this were me, how would we react? How did Paul react?

20) But while the disciples stood around him, he got up and entered the city. The next day he went away with Barnabas to Derbe. (NASU)

There were three miracles here. Nothing short of miraculous physically here that he was able to get back up again in the first place, but then he goes right back into the city again, the place where they just stoned him to death. Brethren, that's power. That's God's power in action. That's not Paul. The next day he hits the road. He's back in business again. If we just stop and really think about this, this guy was beaten to death with rocks. For all intents and purposes if this was me, massive reconstructive surgery, physical therapy, weeks, months in the hospital, infections, post-surgical complications, the whole lot of it. The guy is on the road the next day. Brethren, the point is this power that we're reading of here we have been afforded this same power. We have the spirit of God in us as well and we're seeing it in action; this power moving an individual, invigorating, strengthening an individual. Yes, this account is terrible. I wouldn't want any of us to have to go through this, but God working through any of us and if we allow

His spirit to do so and if we have that faith as that mustard seed, can have this level of impact in our lives.

Okay, so we talked about the reality that we have God's spirit working within us and His spirit enables us to tackle life's toughest challenges, and not just tackle. I almost hate to use that word, but overcome and be strengthened and be so much more, brethren, than weak and base and foolish but shine as lights in this world.

We can expect, if we have this powerful gift that the Father is going to want to have it exercised though. To that end then let's just deal this down into practical, tactical terms that will apply to us today and in our future. In the context of 2 Timothy 1:6-7, that we quoted already, I'd like to extract three attributes that we're given in being empowered by God's holy spirit. We'll extract these from the definition of the word power in the Greek that's used in 2 Timothy 1:7. So, that Greek word for "power" in that verse is "dunamis" which is where we derive our English word dynamics. In Strong's we find that this word means *force*, the primary definition but it's further defined again with the following three attributes.

For this first one I have a bit of a story to share. While I was actually working on this part of what I'm sharing with you here my oldest daughter was sitting at her desk next to me and we were talking about the etymology of the word dunamis. Yes, we are a geeky enough family that talking etymology with my ten year old is not an uncommon conversation. When I told her that the word dynamics comes from the word dunamis, her face lit up. Papa, that's just like one of your workouts that has that name. Wouldn't it be funny if on the day you gave your sermon you did your workout called Dynamics? Keep in mind this is a spontaneous conversation and for those that don't know me I'm kind of a fitness nut. I have an exercise calendar that's pre-populated, usually months in advance. So, I pulled the calendar up and, yes, this morning before services I dragged my carcass to the gym and did Dynamics as my workout. Was it a coincidence? I think not. Now I only mention this story because of the first attribute of power and why I do a workout that has the name Dynamics. In that particular exercise routine it's not a cardio thing. You're not jumping up and down or running around in circles. You're not pumping iron and doing dead lifts and squats and all of that. The focus is on toning. It's on strengthening joints. It's on connective tissue. It's on core muscle strength and all of these pieces fitting together to increase overall ability.

The first attribute of having the spirit of God in us gives us ability that we may not otherwise be able to exercise. We've already explored some of the examples of this attribute, going through Christ's example with the Samaritan woman at the well; Paul's example in Lystra. Again, I want to emphasize the main takeaway for today, brethren, is that this power is in each of us now, today in our lives, active today. Like that Dynamics workout that I do it's about using and growing what we have. I don't exercise to get a body. I already have one. I just have to make it better and that's what it's about, ability.

The second attribute that the power of God's spirit provides is that of abundance. You say, okay abundance in what? It's easy to see areas of our lives where we feel very powerless, that we lack abundance. We see oppressive leadership. We see forces of nature, the hurricanes, in our neck of the woods the Columbia River Gorge forest fires that burned this summer. We see the ravages of age, injury, disease and we question the idea of abundance. What little we seem to have is so fleeting. It just disappears in a heartbeat. Brethren, I encourage all of us to challenge the thinking and to look beyond the physical and the physical limitations. We're all familiar with the account of Paul's thorn in the flesh, but I'd like to just take a quick look at how that story ends. Turn to 2 Corinthians 12:9-10 from the Bible in Basic English. Paul has made his petition and here the response.

2 Corinthians 12:9. *And he said to me, My grace is enough for you, for my power is made complete in what is feeble. Most gladly, then, will I take pride in my feeble body, so that the power of Christ may be on me.*

10) So I take pleasure in being feeble, in unkind words, in needs, in cruel attacks, in troubles, on account of Christ: for when I am feeble, then am I strong. (BBE)

Our weakness, brethren, in the physical means that the power of God has the capacity to fill our lives in the abundance of Him. Really? What more do we need at the end of the day as it were? Physical stuff? What's going to happen to it? It's going away. There's going to be a new heaven and a new earth. God's spirit, that power that we have access to in our lives today is eternal. That is everlasting transcending everything and anything physical.

The third attribute of God's power working in and through us is that it gives our lives meaning. Turn to Hebrews 6:4-5. I'm extracting this a little bit out of context, but using it to stencil again the idea together of God's spirit and meaning, vision, purpose.

Hebrews 6:4. *For in the case of those who have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit, 5) and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, (NASU)*

Again, these verses are tying together the idea that being partakers of God's spirit, having that power in us now is a taste of what's to come. As we talked about earlier, it's that promise, that earnest of our inheritance of salvation and being ministers in God's kingdom spiritually whole here on earth.

Now all three of these attributes we've talked about are very well articulated in Christ's parable of the talents. We're not going to go through all of the details. We're very familiar with it, just at a high level recall that all of them were given talents, abilities. Those that used the talents they were given were blessed with more, abundance. In turn they were given greater responsibilities and opportunity to have a deeper relationship with the master.

How can we be developing these attributes of having the power of God in us today? Turn to 1 Thessalonians 5:18-20. Again we're going to extrapolate some practical things that we can take away to start really tapping into this tremendous gift that we've been given and what it affords to us.

1 Thessalonians 5:18. *in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.*

19) Do not quench the Spirit;

20) do not despise prophetic utterances. (NASU)

Again, I feel that these verses capture very clear practical means for us to grow with the power we've been given. Let's explore this. First in verse 19 - acknowledge the reality that we possess this power. God's spirit is in us. Own it. Believe it. If we live in denial of what we've been given, if we quench or suppress or stifle as that Greek word can be translated. Referencing again back to the parable of the talents if we live in fear of what we've been given, fear of what that might present to us in life, we're going to lose it. That fire will go out. Brethren, now is the time. Now is our opportunity to use this tremendous, tremendous gift that we've been given.

Secondly from verse 18, being thankful for what we've been given, the abundance that we are afforded in this life in the form of at the very, very least the opportunity to grow in the grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Presently reflecting and acknowledging that we have great abundance physically, here at the Feast and being mindful of what this time pictures, the tremendous abundance that this time will represent, at the very least God's way of life covering the earth as the waters cover the sea.

Third from verse 20, taking a positive corollary to what it says here, rather than consider what's to come with little value or regard in our day to day lives keeping the vision of our future clear in our minds. This is in large part why we are here today and why we're sharing this time together during this festival. To an extent we're living the dream, right? The re-establishment of God's way on earth in very, very small part and our role as it's revealed through what we see prophetically in scripture.

Let's begin to wrap up here. Turn please to 1 John 3:1-2. These are words of tremendous encouragement for us.

1 John 3:1. *See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us ... (NASU)*

We didn't earn it. It's not because of what we did. It's not because we're worthy or powerful.

1b) ... that we would be called children of God; and such we are. ... (NASU)

Are we aware of that? Are we cognizant of that? We are the children of God and His love has been bestowed on us.

1 continued) ... For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him.

2) Beloved, now [today] we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is. (NASU)

Brethren, when we are resurrected, when we are fully born into the world of the Eternal, the world comprised of the power of what we have been talking about here today, we're going to see as God sees. We will be as He is and we look forward to that time, won't we? We look forward to the time in which we'll be free of physical limitation, free of pain, free of death. We look forward to that inheritance. We've been given the promise. We look forward to that inheritance of salvation and eternal life.

That being said, my hope, my encouragement for all of us today is to not shortchange the earnest, not shortchange the promise, the gift, what we have now in our lives. As it says in 1 John, God's love for us, our being children of God is a reality for us today. That being the case our task is twofold; own it, believe it, internalize it. Live in the power of God's spirit working in us and in turn be developing the character so that once we are born into the spirit we're not going to succumb to the same outcomes that we started with today.

We talked about the power paradox. We're not going to be empowered and then become sociopaths as spirit beings. We won't repeat the same mistake that Lucifer made. We're not going to look at God's throne and say, I could do that. No. We're going to fall down on our faces in worship. In the context of the Millennium we're going to share a wonderful reality with mankind that yes, there's a much better way to do this. Those in positions of authority, with power don't have to be tyrants. They don't have to be abusers. You don't have to rely on your own will or hope that you are self-aware enough that you'll be able to serve other people without becoming corrupt. Rather, the power, as Christ refers to the Father in Matthew 26:64 and Mark 14:62 is love, outgoing, genuine concern for others.

Brethren, let's own this power within us. Let's allow it to give us the capabilities to lead us into an abundance of opportunity and the strength to endure and to grow beyond just enduring. Allow it to open our minds to what the future has in store. Let's allow the Father to move us through all we need to experience in this life so that we can exercise His power as spiritually complete, proven to be virtuous ministers to the rest of His children in their time.