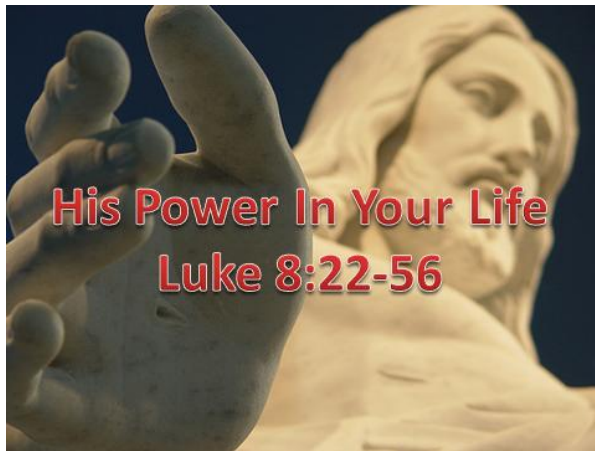


## His Power In Your Life (Luke 8:22-56      September 20, 2009)



When I was a new Christian – the hottest movement in the church was one you don't hear discussed much today – it was John Wimber and the Signs and Wonders Movement.

This movement burst on the scene in opposition to what was the traditional teaching regarding the purpose of miracles in the Bible.

For centuries the church had taught that miracles were given to attest to the credentials of Jesus and the Apostles.

This was based on scriptures like Acts 2:22:

Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man **attested** to you by God **with mighty works and wonders and signs**.

Along came John Wimber who said – while that is true – we have to understand that miracles were given to do more than just attest to who Jesus is.

He taught that one overlooked aspect of the Christian life is spiritual warfare. The moment we come to Christ we enter into a spiritual battle against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

He argued that signs and wonders were not just for Jesus and the Apostles, they are a vital part of our weaponry against these demonic spiritual forces and a necessary tool for evangelism. How can we expect to convince a sceptical world of the reality of the supernatural without miracle power?

I want to suggest to you that Wimber was wrong and he was right.

He was wrong in that nowhere does Scripture declare that the working of miracles is a necessary tool for **us** to fight against Satan. When Paul lists the armour of God in Ephesians 6 – performing miracles is not listed.

And listen to 2 Corinthians 10:3-6:

For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ, being ready to punish every disobedience, when your obedience is complete.

The power to overcome the strongholds of Satan is not working miracles – but Jesus in us enabling us to take every thought captive to obey Christ.

Miracles of power in the world declared that God had come near in the person of Jesus. They were not meant to be a part of the evangelistic toolkit for the saints of every age.

**But**, I do believe Wimber was right in that miracles are meant to do **more** than just attest to us that Jesus is the Messiah.

The power of miracles is available to us – not as power to heal or prophesy – but in this way:



*Miracles reinforce our faith in Jesus who has the power to enable us to trust His leading, live holy and take the gospel to the world.*

This requires just as much miraculous power as any healing.

Listen to 1 John 4:4:

Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.

I constantly sit with men and women who are struggling. Struggling with greed or a wicked tongue or lust or anger or laziness or dissatisfaction. Struggling to see the power of Christ in their lives or in the world.

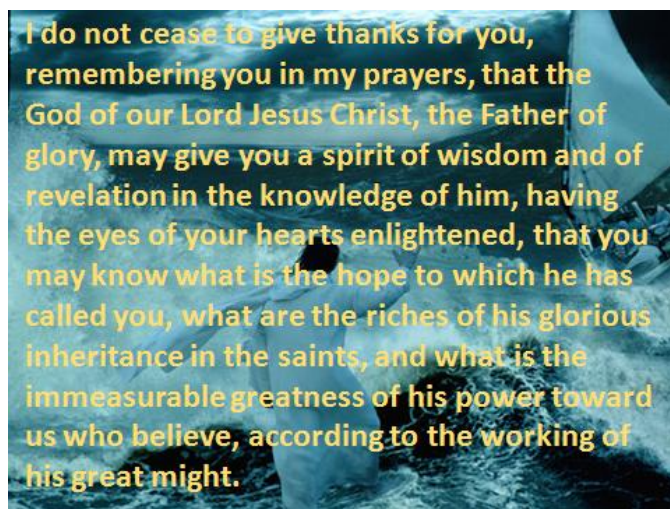
Or I talk to others who wonder if God is powerful enough to know what is happening in their life or do anything about it.

Or others who see their worldly, hedonistic sister as too hard for God to reach with salvation.

I want to suggest that they don't understand the power of Jesus that is theirs by faith.

Power to trust Christ's leading, power to live holy, power to deal with sin, power to stay strong in adversity, power to see God overcome the hardest of hearts.

Paul understood this problem and that is why in Ephesians 1:16-19 he prayed this awesome prayer:



I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might.

Paul prays that Christians might have a spirit of wisdom to know – the hope we are called to – the riches that are our inheritance – and the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us.

And then in the verses that follow – Paul gives three examples of how great this power of God is.

- Powerful enough to raise Jesus from the dead.
- Powerful enough to raise us from being dead in our sins and trespasses.
- Powerful enough to unite Jews and Gentiles in one body.

Having said all of this Paul goes on – because of this incredible power that is available to you:

I ... urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called. Ephesians 4:1

Paul knows that to live holy, to share the gospel, to build the church – requires as much power as raising the dead.

But Christians need to know that through the indwelling Spirit of God this power is available. So he says – wake up saints – you have the power to live – holy lives, united, proclaiming the kingdom. So get with it and call on this power and walk rightly.

The miracles are not just so we say – isn't Jesus powerful. They are there so we realise – this **same** power that raised the dead and fed the 5000 is in **us** to enable us to live holy and proclaim Christ.

Brothers and sisters – when you trusted in Jesus – when you placed your faith in Him to save you – the Spirit of Almighty God Himself came to dwell in you.

And by faith – you have access to the same power that created the heavens and defeated death.

But we forget. When we are faced with challenges – besetting sin, disappointment, illness, death – we forget the power of God that is our spiritual birthright to deal with life in this fallen world.

In our passage today – Jesus performs four miracles of stunning power. Miracles that are meant to sear the minds of Christians with the power of Jesus. As we work through these miracles keep this in mind:



*Miracles reinforce our faith in Jesus who has the power to enable us to trust His leading, live holy and take the gospel to the world.*

I don't plan on looking at these miracles in depth. What I want to do is give you an overview of them – looking at this pattern.

Miracle – reinforces faith – demands a response.

Look with me at Luke. The four miracles are found in Luke 8:22-56.

**First** is the miracle of **calming the storm** – chapter 8 verses 22-25.

Jesus and the disciples entered a boat to cross the Sea of Galilee.

The Sea of Galilee has some unusual features. It is 628 feet below sea level and is surrounded by high mountainous areas. But there are also gaps in these surrounding highlands which function as gigantic funnels to draw the wind down upon the water. The result is that cyclonic storms could strike out of the blue with a fury that was terrifying.

That is what happened here.

The storm hit the boat and the wind beat against the side. As wave after wave crashed over the side, the boat began to fill up with water. This is a storm with all the ferocity nature can conjure up.

But there is one other factor at work here. The disciples know they are in trouble – but Jesus is with them – the only problem is that He is asleep.

So they went and woke him, saying, “Master, Master, we are perishing!”

Matthew 8:25 puts it this way. And they went and woke him, saying, “Save us, Lord; we are perishing.”

We are about to drown – but you can save us.

They have seen Jesus heal lepers and give sight to the blind and raise the dead – surely He can save them.

And He awoke and rebuked the wind and the raging waves, and they ceased, and there was a calm.

But then Jesus shocked them. He looked them in the eye and He said to them, “Where is your faith?”

And they were afraid, and they marvelled, saying to one another, “Who then is this, that he commands even winds and water, and they obey him?”

When Jesus says – where is your faith? What is He asking? And why did they fear?

Is He asking – where is your faith that I can save you from the storm? Were they afraid because they feared they had let Him down?

Possibly. Perhaps they just hoped Jesus could save them rather than knowing Jesus could save them.

But, I think He Jesus asking something far more significant. Where is your faith that not only **can** I save you – but because I **love** you, if it is the best for you – I **will** save you?

**Or** if it is the best for you – I will let you die and go to heaven.

I believe they feared because they were beginning to realise just what it means to be in the presence of God Himself.

Jesus saved them – but then this miracle demands a response.



The response it demands is – ***Trusting Jesus' Love For Us.***

If I asked each of you about the power of Jesus. Did He create the heavens by His word – yes! Is He mightier than Satan – Oh yeah! Will He raise us from the dead – without a doubt!

But that is in sterile isolation – not in the storms of life.

What happens when our lives go in a tangent we don't expect. Our wife develops multiple sclerosis. Our child rebels against the faith. Our boss sacks us. We get caught up in civil war on vacation. We don't meet Mr Right.

Then we have a choice. If we decide this is clearly not the best for us – then we face a choice – either God is not as powerful as we thought – **or** He is not as loving as we thought.

**Or** – a final choice – by faith – we can affirm – **I believe** that God works all things together for good for those who love Him. I don't understand why this is happening – but I believe God knows the end from the beginning and has it all under control.

When Joseph was sold into slavery – despite being a faithful son.



When he was cast into prison – despite being a faithful servant.

He could have questioned the power or love of God. He did not – He argued – these men may have meant it for evil – but God means it for good.

One day – I will see how this fits into the perfect plan of God for my life.

There is a story that comes from the tradition of Jewish wisdom.

The story tells of Rabbi Moshe who took a trip to a distant land. He took a donkey, a rooster, and a lamp.

Since he was a Jew, he was refused hospitality in the village inns, so he decided to sleep in the woods. He lit his lamp to study the holy books before going to sleep, but a fierce wind came up, knocking over the lamp and breaking it. The rabbi decided to turn in, saying, “All that God does, He does well.”

During the night some wild animals came along and drove away the rooster and thieves stole the donkey. Moshe woke up, saw the loss, but still proclaimed willingly, “All that God does, He does well.”

In the morning, the rabbi went back to the village where he was refused lodging, only to learn that enemy soldiers had invaded it during the night and killed all the inhabitants. He also learned that these soldiers had travelled through the same part of the woods where he lay asleep.

Had his lamp not been broken he would have been discovered.

Had not the rooster been chased, it would have crowed, giving him away.

Had not the donkey been stolen, it would have brayed.

So once more Rabbi Moshe declared, “All that God does, He does well!”

The question we have to ask is whether we too believe that “All that God does, He does well!”

When the disciples asked, “Who then is this, that he commands even winds and water, and they obey him?”

They are not just reflecting on the power of Jesus – but on the love of Jesus – and they realised that they had failed to trust in the love of God for them.

Their question is a reference to a famous Psalm – Psalm 107.

Psalm 107 begins like this:

Oh give thanks to the LORD, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever! Let the redeemed of the LORD say so, whom he has redeemed from trouble.

The Psalm then goes on to give a variety of circumstances in which the people of God are in desperate trouble – and because of His love – God saves them. One of the examples is this:

Some went down to the sea in ships, doing business on the great waters; they saw the deeds of the LORD, his wondrous works in the deep. For he commanded and raised the stormy wind, which lifted up the waves of the sea. They mounted up to heaven; they went down to the depths; their courage melted away in their evil plight; they reeled and staggered like drunken men and were at their wits' end. Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress. He made the storm be still, and the waves of the sea were hushed. Then they were glad that the waters were quiet, and he brought them to their desired haven. Let them thank the LORD for his steadfast love, for his wondrous works to the children of man! Let them extol him in the congregation of the people, and praise him in the assembly of the elders. ... He raises up the needy out of affliction and makes their families like flocks. The upright see it and are glad, and all wickedness shuts its mouth. Whoever is wise, let him attend to these things; let them consider the steadfast love of the LORD.

God can and does save His people – He can save them from storms and the waves of the sea – and then they are to give thanks to Him.

The disciples looked at Jesus. Not only was He claiming the power of God – but the love of God to do what is right in their lives. Did they not have faith in His love for them?

Brothers and sisters – we believe God parted the Red Sea and raised Jesus from the dead. We believe He created everything. We believe that He knows the beginning from the end. We believe He was sovereign in the imprisonment of Joseph and the death of Jesus.

But they are all out there. They happen to someone else.

However, when something happens in our lives. When storms come that we don't think should be in our lives. Tragedy, hardship, roadblocks. Then the rubber of faith hits the road of life.

Then we have to remember He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, He loves us enough to do good to us **and** He who can calm the storm is powerful enough to enact that good – and the result is that we walk in faith.

There is a second miracle that Jesus performed – **healing the demoniac** – verses 26-39.



Here we find a man in the region of the Gerasenes who was possessed by many demons.

Demons are powerful beings and they are real.

One of the ways demons affect this world is that they can possess and control a person's body and faculties against their will. They torment their host physically, mentally, and spiritually.

When Jesus reached the Gerasenes, He met him a man from the city who had demons. For a long time he had worn no clothes, and he had not lived in a house but among the tombs.

This man was inhabited by many demons and they had reduced him to a shadow of himself.

He was naked, filthy, living alone, out of his mind.

And Mark 5:3-4 tells us that there was nothing anyone could do about it:

No one could bind him anymore, not even with a chain, for he had often been bound with shackles and chains, but he wrenched the chains apart, and he broke the shackles in pieces. No one had the strength to subdue him.

Demons are powerful beings – far more powerful than men. In our own strength – no one can deal with demons. But compared to Jesus – they are nothing.

When he saw Jesus, he cried out and fell down before him and said with a loud voice, "What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, do not torment me." For he had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. (For many a time it had seized him. He was kept under guard and bound with chains and shackles, but he would break the bonds and be driven by the demon into the desert.) Jesus then asked him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Legion," for many demons had entered him. And they begged him not to command them to depart into the abyss. Now a large herd of pigs was feeding there on the hillside, and they begged him to let them enter these. So he gave them permission. Then the demons came out of the man and entered the pigs, and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and were drowned.

This man is filled with many demons – legion – but when Jesus arrived they immediately knew they were confronted by the awesome power of the Almighty.

One word and they would be thrown into the Abyss forever. But that time is yet future – so Jesus let them enter a herd of unclean pigs who then rushed into the lake and drowned.

The power of Jesus healed this man.

When the herdsmen saw what had happened, they fled and told it in the city and in the country. Then people went out to see what had happened, and they

came to Jesus and found the man from whom the demons had gone, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind.

Here is a man – possessed for years. No one could help him. They couldn't even subdue him with chains.

He was just classed as a hopeless case. Just try and keep him away from the city – until the day comes that he dies.

Jesus arrives and casts out every single demon. His mind is restored. His life is returned.

You would think that the townspeople would rejoice – sadly that is not the case:

They were afraid. And those who had seen it told them how the demon-possessed man had been healed. Then all the people of the surrounding country of the Gerasenes asked him to depart from them, for they were seized with great fear. So he got into the boat and returned.

We don't know why they were afraid. It seems they too realised they were in the presence of immense power – more powerful than a legion of demons. And like the disciples – the natural response is fear.

But, the man who had been freed was called to a response.

The man from whom the demons had gone begged that he might be with him, but Jesus sent him away, saying, "Return to your home, and declare how much God has done for you." And he went away, proclaiming throughout the whole city how much Jesus had done for him.

I have called this response:



***Trusting Jesus' Power In Us***

This man was told to go and tell everyone just how much God had done for him.

Jesus overcame those demons by the power of God.

And that is the point – we all have those demons – those mountains – those trials that seem impossible – and by the power of Jesus in us – we can overcome them.

He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.

I don't know what your demons are. Depression, anger, lust, greed, dissatisfaction.

Everyone of us has battled demons. I am not talking real demons – that type of battle is rare in Australia – and as Christians demons can influence us but not possess us.

I am talking about the struggles that come from our sinful hearts. The besetting sin, the flare ups of sin, the grumbling sin.

This was Paul's point in Romans 6 – **if** we have been united with Christ in His death – **then** we have the power to overcome sin and live holy.

This was Paul's point in Ephesians.

I pray that you may know what is immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe.

The same power that

- Raised Jesus from the dead.
- Raised us from being dead in our sins and trespasses.
- United Jews and Gentiles in one body.

That same incredible power is available to us to:

Walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which we have been called.

Whatever your demon, your struggle, your sin – the power of Christ is available. If He can cast out a legion of demons – he can empower you to overcome anger or lust.

Pray – repent – find accountability – plug into the power of reading His Word – and trust in His power.

See God transform you from within – and then we are to do what this man did – tell the world about what God has done for us – how He changed us and transformed us.

There are two more miracles that Jesus performed – **healing the woman with the discharge of blood** and **raising Jairus' daughter from the dead** – verses 40-56.

These two miracles are linked – because they both have to do with trusting Jesus for salvation.

*First* – trusting Him to save us – *second* – trusting Him to save others.

Look at this first miracle – the woman with the discharge of blood.

There is a throng of people pressing in on Jesus. In the midst of that huge crowd thronging Jesus was one particular woman.

Luke 8:43:

And there was a woman who had had a discharge of blood for twelve years, and though she had spent all her living on physicians, she could not be healed by anyone.

This is a common condition. With the advent of modern medicine we have many cures for this type of condition. Drugs help many women, and those not helped by drugs have a hysterectomy or removal of the womb.

Yet, 2000 years ago there was no cure.

This woman had gone from doctor to doctor exhausting whatever resources she had. Instead of improvement she had only grown worse.

The steady loss of blood would make her anaemic and weak.

Yet, even worse than the physical effects would be the social effects. According to the Mosaic law, a woman with an issue of blood was ceremonially unclean. She was forbidden to have any social contact with others while the condition persisted.

So, for 12 years this woman had been a social outcast who was growing sicker and poorer. It was little different than leprosy in this respect.

No one – no doctor in all the land had been able to help her.

Out of desperation she came to Jesus.

Verse 44:

She came up behind him and touched the fringe of his garment, and immediately her discharge of blood ceased.

Her plan was simply to touch the fringe of Jesus' garment, believing she would be healed.

And this woman was healed and she knew it instantly. And Jesus knew it instantly.

He cried out – “Who touched Me?”

Everyone is pressing in – many had touched Him – but Jesus was speaking of one particular touch – for power had gone out from Him.

Verses 47-48:

And when the woman saw that she was not hidden, she came trembling, and falling down before him declared in the presence of all the people why she had touched him, and how she had been immediately healed. And he said to her, “Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace.”

Note what Jesus said

Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace.

The word – *made well* – is actually the word for *salvation*. While it can mean healed – it usually means saved.

Jesus probably means both:

Daughter, your faith has made you well in this life **and** it has saved you for the life to come; go in peace.

Here is a woman who has a disease no one can heal – no one that is except Jesus.

But this woman also has another disease that no one can heal – no one that is except Jesus.

She is a sinner – dead in her sins and transgressions. Lost. Without hope. Until Jesus comes.

As we have seen again and again in Luke – Jesus heals the effects of sin that can be seen – demons, disease, disaster – in order to demonstrate that he can heal the effects of sin that cannot be seen – the destruction of men’s souls.

This miracle asks for a response of faith:



***Trusting Jesus' salvation of us.***

Do we believe that Jesus is the one place salvation is found?

All we get to see is this world. All we can touch are the things of this world.

Jesus says – there is a world to come – heaven or hell.

And without Me – everyone will go to hell.

There is one way to heaven – faith in Me. Trusting My death pays for your sins. Believe and live.

To the natural man that sounds like foolish blither. But with the power of Christ in us it sounds like salvation to a dying man.

If you are here this morning and you don't know Jesus as Saviour. If you wonder about death. If you cannot overcome sin. If this life has no meaning.

Know this – there is power in the blood of Jesus to save. Come to Him in faith and He will never turn you away. Please – talk to me after the service.

Closely related is the final miracle – the **raising of Jairus' daughter**.

In verse 41 we meet Jairus a ruler of the synagogue.

This man was desperate. His daughter, his only daughter, was about to die. She was beyond earthly help. He had heard that Jesus was nearby and had come and begged Jesus for help.

Jesus agreed to go. On the way He meets and heals the woman with the discharge of blood.

But in verse 49 we find that some men came from the house of Jairus arrive with the news "Your daughter is dead. Do not trouble the Teacher any more."

It's too late.

No one in all the world can help a child who is dead. Death is the end.

Jesus responds – Do not fear – only believe – and she will be well.

The crowd laugh at this.

But He took the girl's mother, father and three of His disciples into the chamber where the dead girl lay.

And taking the child by the hand, He said to her, "Talitha Koum!" (which means, "Little girl, I say to you, get up!").

And immediately the girl rose and began to walk. Jesus has the power over death. That is absolutely astonishing.

What is the point of this miracle? What is the response we are to make?

I believe that this comes in the next section. Look at Luke 9:1-2:

And he called the twelve together and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases, and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal.

Jesus performs these four miracles of incredible power. Then He says – in that same power – go forth and proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal.

This is not the time to go into a theological explanation of my understanding of this passage against that of John Wimber – but suffice it to say that the miracles attested Jesus and the Apostles and the arrival of the Kingdom of God in the form of Jesus. They were for that pivotal time in history.

However – I do believe that the same power to save men and women – to snatch them from the fire – that power is available to us – through proclaiming the gospel.

Notice also that this section then leads on to the miracle of the feeding of the 5000.

That miracle demands a response – the response is Peter's great confession and Jesus' call to take up your cross and follow Him.

The miracles call for a response. They call us to live in the power of Jesus.

Here back in Luke 8 – the response to the healing of Jairus' daughter is:



*Trusting Jesus' salvation of others.*



The same power that raised this girl from the dead is available to raise the spiritually dead – so Jesus sends them out in His power and authority to proclaim the Kingdom.

I ask you – Do you believe in the power of God to save? Do you proclaim the kingdom expecting to see salvations?

On Thursday – I had a haircut. I got talking to the Barber. We talked about Christianity and heaven and hell and Jesus.

He said – I don't believe in a God – I think death just leaves you as worm food.

We talked about Christianity – he said – I cut a lot of people's hair. The few Christians I talk to are weak in their faith – they barely believe what they are saying. But the few Muslim's I cut are strong in their faith.

I think that in 50 years we will be a majority Muslim country.

I don't believe either – but at least the Muslim's seem to really believe it.

I have to say – I walked out quite depressed. His heart was so hardened to the gospel.

Then I looked again at this passage. Jesus raised the dead – He can break down hard hearts. He broke mine and it was incredibly hard.

He can break my brother's heart – He can break your neighbour's heart – He can break your boss's heart. Jesus is in the miracle business.

I prayed for that man – and in a couple of months – I will go back for round two of haircuts and talking about Jesus.

We have to believe in the power of God to save and proclaim the kingdom expecting to see salvations.

George Mueller – the godly Brethren of the 19<sup>th</sup> century – wrote this in his autobiography:

I am now, in 1864, waiting upon God for certain blessings, for which I have daily besought Him for 19 years and 6 months, without one day's intermission. Still the full answer is not yet given concerning the conversion of certain individuals. In the meantime, I have received many thousands of answers to prayer, I have also prayed daily, without intermission, for the conversion of other individuals about ten years, for others six or seven years, of others four, three and two years, for others eighteen months; and still the answer is not yet granted concerning these persons [whom I have prayed for nineteen years and six months] ... Yet I am continuing in prayer and expecting the answer ... Be encouraged dear Christian reader, with fresh earnestness to give yourself to prayer, if you can only be sure that you ask for things which are for the glory of God.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> George Mueller, *Autobiography*, compiled by G. Fred Bergin (London: J. Nisbet & Co. Ltd., 1906), p. 296.

He believed in the power of God for the glory of God and He prayed daily to see that power at work.

In Jesus the power of God was manifest. He speaks and the storms calm – the demons flee – the illness heals and the dead rise.

And then He says that very same power is your birthright.

Two weeks ago – I was asked – are Christians charismatic?

Not in the sense of having the power to heal and prophesy and raise the dead.

But, in terms of having the Spirit of God empowering us – we better believe we are charismatic.

We have the power to have faith when your life is going in a direction that seems wrong – illness, hardship, danger.

Power to overcome besetting sin – to live holy and walk worthy.

Power to save – to save us and to save others.

But Jesus and Paul knew that so often our faith is little – our lives exhibit only a fraction of the power that is our birthright. And so Paul prays:

I pray that you may know what is immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe.

The same power that

- Raised Jesus from the dead.
- Raised us from being dead in our sins and trespasses.
- United Jews and Gentiles in one body.

That same incredible power is available to us to:

Walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which we have been called.

May we know this power – may we live this power – and may it be evident in our lives.