

## OUR POWERFUL GOD

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

Jeremiah 32:17 (NIV)

Good morning! We're on the second part of our series I'm calling **“Our Awesome God”**. We're looking at the fundamental attributes of God that we need to understand so that we can appreciate more the character of God. And it is by understanding that we learn that God is always for us, that he will not let us down, that he loves us more than we will ever know.

Tell the person next to you, “God loves you”. Be careful, not “I love you”, unless that's your spouse.

Last week, we started with a message about the holiness of God. And we learned that in the face of a holy God, we are nothing and we are sinful but despite that God loves us so much that he will forgive us and cleanse us if we just humbly open our hearts to him.

Today's message strikes right at the heart of our deep need for power – our need for strength to survive. The powerlessness that many of us feel all the time. Where do we get the power to live in today's crazy but very real world, in a world where bad things happen to good people, in a world where life seems to be this constant struggle? Where do we get the power to live in a world that's filled with anxiety and makes us ask difficult questions? And where do I get the power to keep going every day of my life?

The reality is this. God never promised you or I that life would be easy. Pain and sin are everywhere. Not just in other states like New York and not just in other countries like China. Pain and sin are right here where we live. They're filling our neighborhoods and they're lurking in the hearts and the bodies of the people that are sitting next to you. Actually, right now there are senseless tragedies happening

to people in this city because they're living powerless lives. Your powerless life might not force you on a crazy shooting rampage, but your powerless life may keep you from living life to its fullest. It may keep you from living life the way God intended it to be lived.

Today's message is that you and I don't have to live powerless lives. You and I don't have to look for other sources of power. God says, "I want you to have My power today and everyday, even in the midst of pain and suffering."

So, I have entitled this message, "Our Powerful God". Based on Jeremiah 37:12 which 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.*"

Other versions of the Bible say, "Nothing is too difficult for you." I remember that old chorus, "Nothing is too difficult for you, nothing is too difficult for you." Do you remember that? Great! It's not difficult for you to admit that you lived during that era, like me.

Now, one of the names of God in the Old Testament is **El Shaddai**. It is Hebrew for "God Almighty." It signifies God's supreme power and sovereignty. "Shaddai" may derive from a root meaning "mountain," symbolizing God's immovable strength. God knew that we would have this need for strength that many of us would live these powerless lives and He says, "I'm the answer to your need. I am your all-powerful God." He didn't just say it, but others said it about Him and that we can access that power. Psalm 68:35 "*You, God, are awesome in your sanctuary; the God of Israel gives power and strength to his people.*" Note the word 'people'. We're going to come back to that at the very end of the message.

Most of us here, we don't question God's power. We don't. We know that God is powerful. We step outside and look at this incredible playground that we call earth and see God's power. What you and I question is, Is God's power available to us? And if so, How do I get it? Those are the questions that we have. I want to

say, Yes, you can get God's power. He promised it. But before we talk about how to access it, I want us to look at when we can count on God's power to help us. I want to take a look at four promises of God. There are more but these are very relevant to us today.

**When can I count on God's power?**

## **1. WHEN I'M TIRED.**

I can count on God's power when I'm tired. I don't even have to ask you if you are tired. I can see it in your faces. I know that by the fact that we live in the Metro DC area that most of us are tired. Just thinking of going to DC makes you feel tired. There's just a lot going on around here. In the capitol, in businesses, in the schools, even in churches.

Obviously, there are some things that you and I can do to slow the pace of our lives down. But in the midst of this, God makes us a promise. Isaiah 40:28-31

*"The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary and his understanding no one can fathom. He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength".*

It's a great verse. God's power is unlimited. He never gets tired. He never gets weary. He never goes to bed. He has unlimited energy. He created the entire universe and said, "What's next?"

Would you like to tap into that kind of power? It's available. When else can I count on God's power?

## **2. WHEN I'VE GOT NOTHING TO OFFER.**

This can be in a relationship where you feel like, "I don't have anything left to give." It could be with one of your children: "I just don't know what she wants from me!" It could be with your job: "I'm in a difficult work situation!"

God says, “I’ll give you power when you don’t feel like you’ve got anything to offer.” In other words, when you feel inadequate.

Every year, as you know, we participate in a youth camp. Students and volunteers and counselors come from different churches. It’s a big crowd. I’m the camp director and every time we start planning I feel like I couldn’t lead this group of almost 200 people, young and old, and I wonder whether I’m up to the task. I feel inadequate and weak.

But I also remember God says, “My power will show up when you’re weak.” Paul said to God, “I’ve got this affliction. Will You take it away from me?” God said no. *“My power shows up best in weak people.”* (2 Cor. 12:9b LB) And I love what Paul says, *“I am glad to boast about how weak I am; I am glad to be a living demonstration of Christ’s power, instead of showing off my own power and abilities.”* (2 Cor. 12:9c)

This is God’s promise to you. When you feel inadequate, when you feel like you’ve got nothing to offer, He wants to invade your life with His power. Do you need to tap into a power like that? It’s available.

When else can I count on God’s power?

### **3. I CAN COUNT ON GOD’S POWER WHEN I’M IN PAIN.**

Some of the pain that’s in this room is very real, and very hard. In the past few weeks I’ve been in conversation with some folks who shared with me the pain that’s going on in their lives.

Like some come from lousy family or marriage situations. The relational dynamics are terrible and there are some hate-filled people in the home and we don’t even want to go back there. That’s pain.

Some of the pain in this room has to do with our own bodily pain. We have some affliction that we live with. And it looks like tomorrow morning when we wake up we’re going to have the same affliction and we’re tired of it. That’s pain.

Some of us in here are in less-than-ideal work situations. We don't like our job. Yet we aren't doing anything about it. We hit work on Monday, to unrealistic quotas and impossible deadlines and it's grinding us down. That's pain.

Some of us have recently lost loved ones.

Some of us are just starting to face the reality of an emotional condition that we're discovering about ourselves.

Some of us have friendships that are fractured.

Some of us have constant financial pressures. We're on the verge of bankruptcy.

Some of us that are parents. We're broken apart because we're watching our kids making decisions and their lives are self-destructing and it's unbearable to watch. That's pain.

Did I hit you? If I didn't, your number's coming up! Pain is right around the corner. There's no shortage of difficulty facing those of us that are here. You're not immune from pain and neither am I. It's inevitable that you and I will experience the kind of soul-piercing heartbreak that comes from some loss that is too painful to bear.

Where do you go with your pain? God promises us power in the midst of pain.

Psalm 73:26 says, *"My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever."* For Christians, God's power doesn't just pacify our pain. When we access God's power, it so invades our life that it satisfies our soul. Do you want to tap into that kind of power? It's available.

When else can I count on God's power?

#### **4. I CAN COUNT ON GOD'S POWER WHEN I'M TEMPTED.**

One of the reasons that some of the pain is in our life is because we haven't had the power to say no to temptation. Paul understood this. Romans 7:18b (Phillips) *"I often find that I have the will to do good, but not the power."* Can anybody

relate to that one? “I want to do it but I don’t have the power!” Temptation is out there!

I saw a Bumper Sticker that said “Lead us not into temptation; I’m perfectly capable of finding it on my own.” I can relate to that. Temptation is inevitable but the good news is God won’t let us be tempted beyond our own capacity to handle that. God is faithful and gives you the power to say no when you’re tempted. You name the temptation – chocolate cake, internet pornography, gossip, lying for a job interview, cheating on your taxes – when you’re tempted, God gives you the power to say no. It says in the Bible, in 1 Corinthians 10:13, *“No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.”* The promise is this: there’s always a way out. Here’s the question: Do you take it? God says, I want to give you the power for the way out. Do you need to access that type of power? It’s available.

The bottom line to these four promises is God saying, “When you are burned out and tired I want to give you My power. In the midst of your feeling inadequate with your life, I want to give you power. I want to give you My power so you can handle the devastating hurt that you’re going through right now ... When you feel like you’re tempted beyond your control, I want to give you My power ...” That’s the good news of today. It is good news. We don’t have to live powerless, weak lives.

Paul understood God’s power when he said in Philippians 4:13, *“I can do all this through him who gives me strength.”* I know what some of you are thinking. “God may give you the power, preacher, but He doesn’t work like that with me. I’m just an average Christian. I love God and everything but frankly, I’m fatigued,

I'm stressed. My kids are out of control. My heart's been broken. My prayers aren't answered. I don't see God's power in my life."

Do you know how I'd respond to you? I would say that God's power is not automatic. As a matter of fact, I've seen a lot of Christians who live their life with no more power than a non-Christian. They may have salvation and God's presence, but they live with no more power.

God does the impossible – He provides us His power. But we do the possible. We do the possible with faith that God will do the impossible.

I want to give you some action **steps of what you and I can do to receive God's power.** I listed A-B-C. It may not be as easy as ABC but it may be a little more memorable this way.

### **A – ADMIT YOU'RE WEAK**

If I want God's power, admit I'm weak. This is where I admit my lack of power, I admit that I don't have it all together, I admit that I can't solve everything on my own. For some of us in here, this is tough because... we think we're God. We think we've got it all together and we can do this. If you're thinking that, who are you kidding? You can't control everything. You can't reach every goal you've set. You're not going to make as much money as you've dreamed up. You're human, you're weak, you're getting older. Your hairline is receding. If you're a man, you're going bald. If you're a woman, your hair is getting thinner. And if you're like me, your hair is becoming gray.

When we pretend to be self sufficient – and the key word is "pretend" – we short circuit God's power for our lives. If you want to access God's power, you start here. You drop to your knees and you admit that you're weak. The Bible is filled with verses on pride. The Bible tells us that God doesn't hate many things but one of the things He hates is pride. In Proverbs 8:13, God says, "I hate pride and arrogance". Pride says I don't need God. Pride says I've got it all together.

Proverbs 29:23 (NLT) says, *“Pride ends in humiliation. While humility [admitting my weakness] brings honor.”* If you want God’s power, at some point in your life, you’ve got to get rid of the steering wheel and say, “God, You take control. You get in the driver’s seat of my life.” Then you open up the channels for God’s power. It starts with this admission – admitting that we’re weak.

## **B – BE CONNECTED TO THE SOURCE.**

You want power? Get connected. I have for years this bottom-line theory that goes like this: things work best when they’re plugged in.

Folks, you and I work best when we’re plugged in to the creator of the universe. If you’ve got a toaster, try to toast a bread without plugging it in. It’s not going to work. I don’t care how good looking that toaster is, I don’t care the net worth of that toaster, I don’t care if that toaster grew up in the church kitchen its entire life, it’s not going to work if it’s not plugged in and neither are you.

Some of you are saying, “I’m already a Christian. I’m already connected with God.” But you know why you don’t have power? Because you unplug yourself by ungodly choices and doing things on your own agenda then we have this arrogant expectation that God is going to bless what we’re doing. Think about it: it wouldn’t make sense for God to supernaturally renew our strength so we could pursue something outside of God’s design for our life. As I go through these action steps – A-B-C – and you’re sitting there thinking, “I’ve been a Christian for a long time. Move on!” You see, it’s not you do this once and then you’ve got His power. It’s you do this all the time. You’re always admitting your weakness. You’re working to get connected with God.

Jesus understood this connection theory and He gives us a word picture. I love the way Jesus taught because it was so visual. Jesus says in John 15:5, *“I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me [if you are connected with Me] and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.”*

My dad was a good chess player as I was growing up. He taught me how to play chess. I think I was 6 or even younger when I learned it. He was calm and he was patient and he sat by my side and he helped me. He even gifted me a chess book which at the time became my Bible. As long as my dad was there I was a good chess player. We would play chess and sometimes I would get confused and mess up but he always corrected my mistakes and even let me win when I should have lost. Dads, can you relate to that? He would keep me focused. He would encourage me. He would get me on track. We were connected! Things work best when they're plugged in.

There may be some of you here that says, "It seems so hard to get plugged into a relationship with God. How do you do that?" No, it's not hard! What's hard is getting a guy to come and clean your house's gutters. One time I called this company to send someone because my house's gutters need cleaning. They said they'd send someone immediately. I waited the whole day, and no one came. I called the next day, and they said they had sent someone but nobody was home. I told them I was, but they said the guy knocked on the door. Then he heard a dog bark, but no one opened the house. And I said, "I don't have a dog." It turned out he went to the wrong house.

God's not like that at all. He doesn't get lost. As a matter of fact, he knows exactly where you're at and the Bible tells us that God stands at the door of your heart and He knocks and he waits for you. He's standing right there and He's waiting for you to open the door. If you're a seeker, you're checking this whole thing out, He's waiting for you just to say Yes, to open the door and step across the line to bring Him into your life. If you've been a believer for a while and you feel like you're unplugged, there are so many ways. That's why Fil-Am church exists to help you get plugged and stay plugged into that relationship with God. You can get into one of our home groups where you have fellowship with other believers.

Or you can join our men's group or women's group or young adults group or college age group or youth group. Or you can attend our CLASS 101, 201 up to 401. Or you can volunteer in any of the ministries in our church. And, of course, you can plug in by reading your Bible, doing your quiet time, praying, fasting, and so on.

God is waiting for you to get plugged in. He's the source of power. You need to get plugged into him.

Lastly,

### **C – CHOOSE GOD'S WAY WITH FAITH THAT GOD'S POWER WILL SHOW UP**

This is the toughest. The Bible makes it very, very clear that God's power and my faith are connected. For me to get God's power, I've got to step out in faith. What does "choose God's way" mean? It means step out in obedience to what God calls us to do before the power shows up. That's a key word – before. God wants us to take action before He supplies the power. Some of you may be thinking, "You mean I have to take action and act as if I have the power even before I have the power in order to get the power?" Yes! That's where faith enters in.

*"What is faith?..."* Hebrews 11:1, *"Faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see."* The way it works is that you choose God's way. You make godly choices.

You see, B and C work very closely together. When I'm connected with God, my choices become a lot clearer. Notice I didn't say my choices are easier. There aren't easy choices in life, but they become clearer. So, I choose God's way and God says, "Ok, now My power is going to show up." He sees our faith and He turns on the power.

You could read the Bible from cover to cover and you would find event after event, story after story, of this principle – you choose God's way and God's power

shows up. Have you seen the animated movie the *Prince of Egypt*? If you didn't, you can read the book – the Bible. Here's the Cliff Note Version: In Egypt, Pharaoh is the leader of Egypt and he has the Israelites as slaves. It's a terrible situation for these Israelites. They are God's people. Moses, representing God and God's people, goes to Pharaoh and says, "Let my people go." God wants them out of slavery and out of Egypt. Pharaoh keeps saying, no and plagues come on Egypt. And finally after the tenth plague, Pharaoh puts up his hands and says, "Ok, they can go." Moses marches the Israelites out of Egypt.

Imagine being a slave for years and now you're free. They're dancing and they're singing and having a good old time marching out of Egypt. Back in Egypt, Pharaoh all of a sudden goes, "What did I just do?" He starts thinking about all the slaves and the free labor – a recession, a depression – and he goes, "I must have been crazy to let them go! Who's going to make bricks in the hot sun? Who's going to clean the bathroom? Who's going to do all this stuff?" So he calls out the Egypt National Guard and says go get them. Imagine you're an Israelite and you're kind of singing and dancing and marching to freedom and all of a sudden you look over your shoulder and you see the Egyptian army coming after you with obvious evil intent. In front of you is a sea. They're chasing you into a sea. It's a holocaust in the making.

Now, all of a sudden, they think they're going to get killed and they start going crazy. They say to Moses in Exodus 14:11-12, *"They said to Moses, 'Was it because there were no graves in Egypt that you brought us to the desert to die? What have you done to us by bringing us out of Egypt? Didn't we say to you in Egypt, 'Leave us alone; let us serve the Egyptians'? It would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the desert!'"*

I wonder if some of us say that sometimes. "Our powerless life was far better than stepping out in faith." But Moses told the people *"Do not be afraid. Stand*

*firm and you will see the deliverance the Lord will bring you today.*” (Exodus 14:13)

Would you take that answer? Think about it: You’re thinking “I’m either going to get drowned or killed and Moses says, “Relax, pal! And watch what God will do.” I don’t know. I don’t think I would keep marching into the ocean. I don’t think I have that kind of faith. I think I’d be one of those guys saying, “I think I’ve got something caught in my sandals. Why don’t you go ahead?”

And Moses continues, *“The Lord will fight for you; you need only to be still.”* (Exodus 14:14) And we know what happens. God speaks and the sea opens up. God’s power arrives as they took that step in faith.

I could go from story to story. You could do the same thing. The principle is you choose God’s way and God’s power shows up.

Moses didn’t know how God was going to intervene until he trusted in God’s power and he kept walking.

God says to you today, “I will honor your faith by a display of My supernatural power. I’ll give you power along the way.” If you’re like me, and I think some of you probably are, I don’t want power along the way. I want power before I go. I want power before the crisis. I want power before the showdown. I want power before the ocean’s edge. And if I was to consult God, that’s what I would tell Him.

But the Bible teaches that God supplies power along the way according to our faith. And the same God who intervened and expressed His power throughout the pages of the Bible is the same God who says to you today, right now, “I want to infuse your life with My power.” Admit you’re weak, be connected to the source of power and choose God’s way with faith that God’s power will show up.

People say, “How do I know it works that way?” Because the Bible promises it. I’ve seen it in the lives of hundreds of people that I’ve met with and counseled with and been friends with. I’ve seen it in this church. This church started thirty

years ago just like that – choosing God’s way with faith that God’s power will show up.

ABC. Are these easy steps? No. But they’re good steps. And when you move in the direction that God wants you to take, His power will show up. You do the possible with faith that God will do the impossible. But this power that we’re talking about, the only other condition that I haven’t told you about is, you don’t get the power without the person. The person is Jesus Christ. Remember earlier I said that you take note of the word people in this verse? *“You, God, are awesome in your sanctuary; the God of Israel gives power and strength to his people.”* (Psalm 68:35) Who are his people? It says in Romans 8:17 *“And since we are His children [His people] we will share his treasures. For everything God gives to his son Jesus is now ours, too.”*

If you’re someone that’s never opened up your life to Jesus Christ, you’ve heard that he died for you on the cross to forgive your sins, and he was buried, and he rose again from the dead to conquer sin and death forever, but you’ve never let go of the steering wheel of your life, would you just say – it’s as simple as this – “Lord Jesus Christ, come in to my life. I believe you died for me, you were buried and you rose again so I will rise again, too, would you give me the power that I need because I want to live Your way?”

For the rest of you, what area of your life do you need God’s power to show up? Make this very practical to you. It’s not just fancy talk. It’s living by God’s power.

Prayer:

God, thank You for Your love. Thank You that Your love for us isn't based on what we look like or how much money we have in our savings account. Your love for us isn't based on our background. But You love us because You created us. And You're calling us to be Your children. And, Lord, we're thankful that we don't have to live powerless lives. We're thankful that we can live a life infused with Your supernatural, divine, unlimited power. That You would think and care enough about us to give us that incredible gift. God, I pray as we all go our separate ways that we might be different people as a result of hearing Your word. That we might admit our weakness and be connected to You and choose Your way with faith that Your power will show up. And thank You that You live up to Your promises and Your power does show up to Your people. We pray this in Jesus' name, Amen.