

Unmistakable Power of God

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Seven UnCharacteristics That Can Change the World in 2017 – Lesson Five

To date, we have examined four character traits that provide evidence of Christ in our lives to a world that desperately needs to see and experience them as they interact with us. The series is called “*Seven UnCharacteristics That Can Change the World in 2017*”. (Links provided below.)

- **Unconditional love**
- **Undying gratitude**
- **Unspeakable joy**
- **Unwavering faith**

In the previous lesson, we considered examples of *wavering* and *unwavering faith* in the lives of men God chose to use. It seemed appropriate to follow that with this lesson in which we will explore the power of God, placed at our disposal, *to live out our faith* in direct obedience to the command of Christ: ***Take up our crosses daily and follow Him into an unwelcoming and, at times, hostile world.***

Unmistakable power. What does this mean? Throughout history, men have been known to seek and exhibit great power in many forms. Men have used their powerful minds to create things of unimaginable power like the atomic bomb. Men have used great physical power to conquer great heights, attain enormous strength, and run incredible distances. Men have used political power to create, control, and manipulate people to build powerful nations. Most take credit for what *their power* accomplished.

The following statement will seem completely absurd to many readers, but it contains more truth than most of us will admit. *Over the centuries since the Reformation, despite the vast spreading of the Gospel, people have apparently become confused when it comes to*

distinguishing between the power of men and the power of God. If you think that is ridiculous, answer this question:

Why do more people today follow men than God?

We are going to ask and answer three questions to help clarify at least part of the confusion. In addition, this exercise should equip and empower Christians to (better) *understand, appropriate, and use* the unmistakable power of God. Here are the questions.

- 1. Can anyone really understand the power of God?*
- 2. How do I 'appropriate' the power of God?*
- 3. How do I use this Power to help change the world?*

1. Can anyone really understand the power of God?

The answer most expect to such an apparently outlandish question is *no*, but that is incorrect. The correct answer is *yes – enough to believe He is Who He says He is and trust Him*. The revelation of God to man has always been that way. God gives us *enough*. And that is more than most of us can understand. From the study of God's Word, let's consider two examples and insights into His power.

- **Unfathomable Power**

- **Unlimited**

Power

Unfathomable Power. *"Incapable of being fully explored or understood."* That was the best definition I found that fits this lesson. A *fathom* is a nautical term. It is a measure of six feet of depth of water. Measuring the depth of water in which a ship sailed goes back into ancient history. For centuries, sailors used line and lead to attempt to measure or *fathom the deeps*. In the Bible (Act 27), we find sailors aboard Paul's ship desperately measuring depths to see if they were heading into shallow waters in which the ship would be destroyed. Unfortunately, when lines were too short to reach the bottom, sailors were on their own or at the mercy of the gods of

the seas. The ocean depth was *unfathomable*! Fear of the unknown often accompanied such uncertainty.

Fortunately for Christians, the *unfathomable power of God*, produces hope, not fear, in the lives *believing believers*. While we cannot measure His power, we can observe and understand that which He made visible to us in nature and through divine revelation. Two examples:

– The Power of Creation. *Bringing everything that is out of nothing that was...that's power!*

“For by Him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible...all things were created through Him and for Him.” (Colossians 1:16 ESV)

– The Power of the Resurrection. *Power over death, without which we remain hopelessly lost.*

*“the eyes of **your understanding** being enlightened; that ye may know what is...**the exceeding greatness of His power to us who believe**, according to the working of **His mighty power**, which He wrought in Christ, **when He raised Him from the dead.**”* (Ephesians 1: 18-20 KJV)

Unlimited Power. First Person declaration. In Genesis 17, the Lord appeared to Abraham and introduced Himself saying, “I am God Almighty (El Shaddai)...”. The word you hear used by Christians on this subject is *omnipotent*, Latin for *all power*. If we take God at His word, this should be enough.

But God's unlimited power is also ***indefatigable***. I love that word! Like batteries, human power runs down, then out. It is reassuring and empowering to know our God, on whom we depend for everything, never runs out of gas or gets tired of hearing and helping His children. Isaiah, the prophet, exclaimed,

“Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth does not become weary or tired...” (Isaiah 40: 28 NASB)

Job's young friend, Elihu, chimed in the conversation with the following words that served as a reminder to Job, who was going through incredible trials and testing put upon him by Satan himself.

"God's power is unlimited. He needs no teachers to guide or correct Him. Others have praised God for what he has done, so join with them." (Job 36: 22-23 CEV)

Can anyone really understand the power of God? I hope you now agree the answer is yes-enough to know and believe God has all the power we will ever need. He made it available to us through the most mysterious Person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit. And that leads us to the second question:

2. How do I appropriate the power of God? I chose the word, *appropriate*, and its use as a verb, for two specific reasons: (1) its meaning and (2) it requires action on our part.

Appropriate, the verb, means **to seize for oneself as one's right**. It carries the connotation of *confiscating* or *commandeering*, which seems negative to some. But it is not. Christians not only have the right, we have the obligation to *appropriate* the unfathomable, unlimited power of God without which we are powerless.

Christians know Jesus sent the Power of God in the Person of the Holy Spirit after He ascended into Heaven. I am fully aware of the differences of opinions among denominations regarding the Holy Spirit. I am not wading into that discussion here. However, there are two things the Bible teaches regarding the Holy Spirit some Christians either do not know or know and do not practice.

- We must *appropriate* (seize as ours) this Power for it to be of any use in our lives.
- The Holy Spirit has to work on and in us before He can work through us.

Consider these excerpts from Jesus' post-resurrection appearance to His

disciples:

*"...Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, "Peace be with you" ...He showed them both His hands and His side...So Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you; as the Father has sent Me, **I also send you.**" And when He had said this, He breathed on them and said to them, "**Receive the Holy Spirit.**" (John 20: 19-22 NASB)*

Note: Jesus entered in power, walking through the door or appearing out of nowhere! He demonstrated power over death when He showed His scars. He reminded them of their (our) mission, and gave them the Power (Holy Spirit) they needed to succeed (as He defines it) – **Power they had to receive.**

The answer to this question can be simply stated in two words: *believe* and *receive*. We *believe* God for our salvation in Christ that we freely *receive*. We *believe* Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to provide power to live for Him. And, just as the disciples did when He breathed on them, we *receive* Him.

Having *appropriated* such Power, how can we use it change the world?

3. How do I use this Power to help change the world? You won't believe the answer! Despite thoughts to the contrary, we do not use God. He uses us. As we study the Bible, we learn that God takes people through a process to prepare them for His use. And most of the time, ***it ain't pretty!*** Remember another key point that too often gets lost in today's consumer-oriented brand of Christianity. It is not about you or me. It is all about Him. He will do whatever it takes to accomplish His agenda, not ours. What does the process look like? Consider these examples.

- Circuitous career path – It took Moses forty years to rise to the top, one act to reach the bottom, forty years to find his way back, and forty more to accomplish what God wanted in the first place.
- Breaking in a king – David started out as a humble shepherd. Exalted to the level of king, all hell broke loose in many

areas of his life. Humbled and broken, he remained faithful to God and finished well.

- God's idea of fishing – landing the big one. Jonah did not catch the giant fish; the fish caught him only to spit him out after a few days of trying to digest him.
- Role reversal – persecutor to persecuted. Saul left fame and fortune behind only to find himself on the other side of the whips, chains, and prisons. Incredible irony.
- Creating new norms – Turning Death into Life. Leaders who serve. Loving the unlovable.

See any common denominators? Let me suggest three. *Humility. Surrender. Utility.* You will note *ability* is not among the list. All God's people have ability. But God cannot use it until we have been through the *process*. This side of Heaven, the process does not end. That is why we must rely on *His unmistakable power* throughout the process or we will give up and quit—turn back to what was easier or more expedient. Powerless Christians are those who rely on their own power or that of others. That leads to disappointment and, often, disillusionment with God. The latter makes no sense because they chose their own power over the unmistakable power of God – yet still blame Him.

My dear brothers, there is no mistaking the power of God. We absolutely can *understand* it. We absolutely must *appropriate* it.

And He absolutely will *use* it on us, in us, and through us to change the world when we pray as Jesus did, "*not My will, but Yours be done*".

Make no mistake about that!

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Walter".

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