

GOD-INSIDE MINDED

- A. Introduction: Eph 1:18-23--Paul, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, prayed that Christians would have increased revelation and understanding in three specific areas as we get to know God better—the hope to which we’ve been called, the riches of God’s inheritance in and for us, and the greatness of His power.
1. In this part of our series we’re looking at the greatness of God’s power toward us, the same power that raised Christ from the dead, the Holy Spirit. In previous lessons we’ve discussed these points.
    - a. As we study the Book of Acts (the record of the first Christians) we find that there are two distinct experiences with the Holy Spirit — being born of the Spirit and being baptized in the Spirit with the evidence of speaking in other tongues. John 20:22; Acts 2:1-4; Acts 8:5-8; 14-19; Acts 9:3-18; I Cor 14:18; Acts 10:30-48; Acts 19:1-7
      1. A person who has been born again has the Holy Spirit in Him. But there is another encounter with Him. Some rightly refer to it as a greater yielding to the Spirit.
      2. Acts 1:8--When the first disciples were baptized in the Holy Spirit they received power. This is the same word Paul used when he referenced the power toward and in believers (Eph 1:19, *dunamis*, miraculous, explosive power).
    - b. Christianity is more than a belief system or a code of ethics, although there are things we must believe and behaviors we need to adopt. Christianity is a living, organic relationship with God.
      1. God’s plan has always been to indwell men and then express Himself through us. The night before Jesus went to the Cross He told His disciples that after His resurrection the Holy Spirit, who had been with them, would be in them. John 14:16,17
      2. After Jesus returned to Heaven the Holy Spirit was poured out (or sent) to accomplish or make real in the lives and experience of men what the Father through Jesus provided at the Cross. The Holy Spirit is the Performer of the Godhead.
        - A. If Jesus is your Lord and Savior, there’s Someone in you who wasn’t there before— Almighty God, by His Spirit. Paul referred to believers as the temple or dwelling place of God. I Cor 6:19
        - B. II Cor 6:16--God wants to dwell and walk in us. “Dwell in us” speaks of relationship. “Walk in us” speaks of activity or God working in and through us. We are working on becoming God-inside minded. The Greater One is in us. I John 4:4
  2. The Holy Spirit is in you to produce transformation that will restore you to your created purpose — sonship and conformity to the image of Christ. Eph 1:4,5; Rom 8:29,30
    - a. Man is a three part being — spirit, soul (mind and emotions), body. When you bow your knee to Jesus as Savior and Lord, an internal transformation takes place in your inner being, in your spirit. You are transformed by the Spirit of God through the new birth, from a sinner into a son or daughter of God. I John 5:1; John 1:12,13; etc.
    - b. This change is the beginning of a process that will eventually transform your soul and body and make you like Jesus in character and power, holiness and love, in every part of your being.
    - c. God the Holy Spirit is in you to produce continual transformation. He’s in you to empower you to walk even as Jesus walked (Eph 3:6; Eph 3:20; Phil 1:6; Phil 2:13; Heb 13:21). God works in us by His Spirit and His Word, not on us by outward circumstances (II Cor 3:18). We’re talking about how to cooperate with Him as He works.
- B. Paul prayed that Christians would know the greatness of God’s power in us and become conscious of the fact that God is in us. He lived with the awareness that he had inward strength provided by God in Him
1. The epistles to the Ephesians, Colossians, and Philippians were all written while Paul was jailed in Rome (AD 60-63). Although he was eventually released, he didn’t know at the time he wrote whether or not he would be put to death (Phil 1:20; 2:17). These letters abound with Paul’s awareness of the fact that he knew God dwelled in him and show us how that reality helped him in a really hard place.

- a. Paul faced great opposition and persecution, along with the rigors of travel in the ancient world, as he journeyed through the Roman Empire preaching the gospel.
1. Yet, as we read his epistles, there's no hint of the issues many of us deal with in the face of trouble. We don't find Paul asking these kinds of questions: Why is God letting this happen? What did I do wrong? What door did I leave open? Is God punishing me for my sins?
  2. Keep in mind that this was a man who actively persecuted Christians, including consenting to and turning them over to die. Acts 7:58; 8:3; 9:1,13; etc.
- b. He knew his troubles weren't from God. He knew this earth is infused with corruption and death because of Adam's sin (Rom 5:12). He knew life's troubles are temporary and what lies ahead far exceeds the hardships of life (Rom 8:18). He knew God causes the challenges of life to serve His eternal purposes (Rom 8:28; II Cor 4:17).
- c. These are all topics of study for another day. But consider this point in connection with our present discussion. Paul knew that as a temple of God he was cleansed from all of his sins and failures and God in him would get him through what ever came his way.
1. I Cor 15:9,10--In the context of the fact that he was not worthy to be called an apostle because of his persecution of the church he said, by the grace of God, I am what I am.
  2. Eph 3:7--In the context of proclaiming the gospel as instructed him, he said he was made a minister through God's grace by the effective working of His power (*dunamis*) "which was bestowed on me by the exercise—the working in all its effectiveness—of His power" (Amp).
  3. Col 1:29--Also in the context of preaching the gospel Paul stated that he labored according to God working mightily in him. Mightily is two Greek words (*en dunamis*). Together they picture inner strengthening or empowering.
2. Paul knew experientially that God was in him to strengthen him and lift him up even in the most difficult of times, including in prison facing death.
- a. Most Christians know the verse: I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. For most of us, it's little more than a cliché. For Paul, this was a living reality. He made that statement while imprisoned in Rome.
1. Phil 4:11,12--I have learned how to get along happily whether I have much or little. I know how to live on almost nothing or with everything. I have learned the secret of living in every situation, whether it is with a full stomach or empty, with plenty or little. (NLT)
  2. Phil 4:13--I have strength for all things in Christ Who empowers me—I am ready for anything and equal to anything through Him Who infuses inner strength into me, [this, I am self-sufficient in Christ's sufficiency. (Amp)
    - A. He knew that nothing could come against him that was bigger than God in him. That knowledge alone gives strength in the face of trouble. The Greek translated strengtheneth (KJV) is *en dunamoo* which is an inner empowering or strengthening.
    - B. Eph 3:16--This is the man who prayed that Christians would be strengthened or empowered with might (*dunamis*) by God's Spirit in them. If he believed and expected this for others, surely he believed and expected it for himself.
- b. Paul also recorded in another epistle an oft quoted statement that has also become a cliché for many of us but was a living reality for him. We have a treasure in earthen vessels. II Cor 4:7
1. His point isn't: We're so weak and unworthy; we're no good. The point is: God is in us and wants to show Himself through us "that the grandeur and exceeding greatness of the power (*dunamis*) be shown to be of God and not from our selves.
  2. This is natural (or created) human ability infused with supernatural (uncreated) power. Christianity is supernatural and we've been created to express the life and power of God.
- c. Consider this example. John 14:10-12--At the Last Supper Jesus told His disciples that He did the Father's works by the power of His Father who dwelled in Him. (Remember, the Father had anointed Jesus with the Holy Ghost and power, Acts 10:38).

1. In that context Jesus told His followers: You'll do the works that I do and greater because I am returning to My Father. We will send the Holy Ghost who will empower you.
2. In Acts 3 Peter healed a lame man in the name (power and authority) of Jesus. Peter knew what he had received and freely gave what he had (v6). He believed and acted accordingly and God in him moved through him.
  - A. While speaking to the crowd that gathered Peter said: Why do you think we did this by our own power or holiness? The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob has brought glory to His Son by doing this. v12,13
  - B. You will recall that Peter abandoned Jesus the night He was arrested. What kind of guilt did Peter struggle with over his failure? But he knew that he was cleansed by the power of the blood and that God was in him and available to him because of the Cross.
3. I realize that precious few people function at the level of power displayed here, but if we don't preach it, we'll never get there. It's by faith and faith comes from hearing. I'd rather shoot for the stars and get half way there than aim for the lamppost and hit it.
3. Back to II Cor 4:7. Paul made this statement about treasure in earthen vessels in the context of the persecutions and hardships he had recently experienced in Asia (1:8-10).
  - a. He went on to describe the effect of this treasure in him and his associates as they dealt with it: II Cor 4:8,9--We are pressed on every side by troubles, but we are not crushed and broken. We are perplexed, but we don't give up and quit. We are hunted down, but God never abandons us. We get knocked down, but we get up again and keep going. (NLT)
  - b. He continues his thoughts down into Chapter 5. There's much in here we don't have time to discuss right now. But note several points:
    1. II Cor 4:14; II Cor 5:1-8--In the face of death Paul was able to say, even if we are killed as we serve the Lord, this treasure in us will raise our bodies from the dead.
    2. II Cor 4:16--Even though he faced these dangers, he had an awareness of inward strength and provision. In Col 1:27 he referred to "Christ in me" as "the hope of all the glorious things to come" (Phillips).
    3. II Cor 4:17,18--He had an eternal perspective. In terms of eternity (the life to come) his troubles were momentary and light and God was using them for eternal good.
4. II Cor 12:7-9--Later in this epistle Paul gave a personal testimony of how this worked in his life.
  - a. II Cor 12:1-4--Paul was given tremendous revelation from God. Jesus Himself personally taught him the gospel he preached (Gal 1:11,12). Consequently, the devil comes to steal the Word of God (Mark 4:15). He worked tirelessly to make Paul's preaching ineffective by discouraging him and discrediting him.
    1. Paul revealed that he was assigned a messenger (*aggelos*, a being or personality) from Satan, sent to buffet (or continually harass) him. Paul called it a thorn in the flesh. When thorn is used figuratively, refers to troublesome people. Num 33:55; Josh 23:13; Judges 2:3
    2. When we read the record of Paul's ministry in Acts we find that Paul would go to a city to preach. Someone (or something, the thorn) would stir up the crowd and Paul would be mobbed, put in jail, or thrown out of town. Acts 13:45; 14:2-6; 19:21-41
  - b. People mistakenly say that thorn was given (or allowed) by God to keep Paul humble. Paul stated it was a messenger from Satan. Why would he try to help a Christian become more Christ-like? The New Testament tells believers to humble themselves. I Pet 5:6
    1. Note Paul doesn't say the thorn came to keep him from exalting himself. It came to keep him from being exalted. Exalted is made up of two Greek words (*hyper*, above) and *airo* (to lift). The word is used to describe what the wind does to the sails of a boat.
      - A. The thorn came to keep those to whom Paul preached from believing Paul's testimony and giving him the respect and credence he deserved as an eyewitness of Jesus.
      - B. The thorn also came to steal the Word from Paul. If anyone had reason to be discouraged

and give up it was him. But knowledge from God's Word can lift anyone above even in the midst of life's trials and hardships and make him a conqueror.

2 Satan's efforts against Paul were unfruitful. He called the many difficulties he faced light and momentary and said he looked not at what he could see but at what he couldn't see. By focusing on the Word of God which reveals God's unseen power and provision, Paul was lifted up above in the midst of the numerous trials he faced. (lessons for another day)

c. Paul stated that he asked God to remove the thorn. However, Paul was asking God to do what He has not promised to do at this point in time. Satan is the god of this present world (II Cor 4:4) and will continue his activities until Jesus returns.

1. God gave Paul what he needed to deal with the thorn. He reminded Paul: I am your strength

May grace is sufficient to enable you to deal with whatever Satan or life in a fallen world brings your way. Strength is the word *dunamis*. God's grace has provided us with His strength or power abiding in us.

2. II Cor 12:10--I am well content with these humiliations of mine, these insults, the hardships, the persecutions, the times of difficulty I undergo for Christ (Knox) for when I am weak (in human strength), then I am [truly] strong—able, powerful in divine strength (Amp).

5. Paul wrote to Christians: In the face of life's trials and the devil's activities Paul told Christians to be strong in the Lord and the power of His might. Eph 6:10

a. The Greek translated strong is *en dunamoo* (the same word used in Phil 4:13). It means an inner empowering or strengthening. Paul knew God was in him to strengthen him, no matter what came his way. He didn't look to his outward circumstances to try to figure out what God was doing.

b. He knew God was in him to enable and empower him to deal with whatever came his way. He exhorted Christians to be conscious of this reality, to believe it, and to expect it.

C. Conclusion: We have much more to say but consider several thoughts as we close. We waste a lot of time looking at our circumstances and trying to figure out what God is doing. You can't tell what God is doing by looking at circumstances. He speaks to us through His Word, not circumstances. Look at the Bible.

1. His written Word tells us that He is working in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure (Phil 2:13). It pleases Him to strengthen us inwardly so that we can withstand life's hardships. It pleases Him to empower us inwardly so that we can demonstrate the character and power of Christ outwardly.

2. Take time to think about the fact that God is in you by His Spirit to work in and you through you. Instead of begging Him to help you, begin to thank Him for His indwelling presence, power, and provision. Thank Him that by His strength in you, you can make it through whatever life brings your way in a manner that is glorifying to Him.

3. Become God-inside minded. The Greater One is in you!! God dwells in us and wants to walk in us. More next week.