

XVIII. L.E.A.D. in Biblical Perspective
Lifestyle of Evangelism and Discipleship
“Hindrance #4—Overcoming the Lack of Power”
Ephesians 6:19
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We will be looking at a number of passages in this study. In this study we will be dealing with the hindrance of overcoming the lack of power in evangelism. Its crucial nature perhaps can be highlighted in Acts 4. Acts 4:32 says [32] *Now the full number of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and **no one said that any of the things that belonged to him was his own, but they had everything in common.*** Before I go further in this text a sidebar to this verse is that people tend to use this verse to say that the Bible supports communism where nobody owns what they have and everyone owns it together. Our attitude is that what is mine is not mine and it's nobody else's either for all that we have belongs to the Lord and as a Christian I now see myself as an owner steward of what the Lord has entrusted to me. Part of my use of what God has given me would be for the saints in mercy and benevolence ministries. Even though no one said any of the things belonged to them they did but they didn't go around strutting about how much they owned because ultimately they saw it as belonging to the Lord. They were stewards of it with tithes, offerings, and ministries of mercy and because of that they then had everything in common so that what each of them had was available to God's people as the Lord moved it upon our hearts to give to one another.

Acts 4:33 says [33] *And **with great power** the apostles were giving their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all.* Here is this glorious work of evangelism that is being done by the Apostles. There's this witness that is being born to Jerusalem as to how people were unified in mind, heart and soul. They were freely giving to one another as others had need and this is a testimony of the body of believers before Jerusalem. The other testimony was the Apostolic preaching of the Gospel – the death and resurrection of Christ. They did this work of verbal evangelism with great power.

Why is this important? Let's think about the task. When you're sharing the Gospel with someone who is not yet a Christian their spiritual condition is they are dead. We don't have the power to raise them from spiritual death and neither do they so we need power. We don't just need someone's power but we need Divine power to be about the work of evangelism effectively. We need the same power the Apostles had but we won't get the same calling as the Apostles. The Apostolic ministry is through. The Bible gave us Prophets and Apostles where the Prophets gave us the Old Testament and Apostles gave us the New Testament. Apostles are those whom Jesus called to bear witness of Him who were with Him from His baptism till His resurrection. They had particular gifts of signs, wonders and miracles that they did with great power.

Now I did not say that God has quit doing miracles. I said that the Apostolic gift of signs, wonders and miracles is not here. I was in a prayer meeting today praying for miraculous healings of three different people and got a report shortly thereafter that there was a miraculous healing in one of these last week. There is no doubt in my mind that God still does signs, wonders and miracles but not through an agency of the Apostolic office because that has been fulfilled. I am referring to the Divine power that accompanied the Apostles as they did the general office of proclaiming the Gospel everywhere they went.

What power is that? It is the power of God. Where do you get the power of God? You get it from God. Where do we find God's power plants for us to draw His power from and how do we connect to them? For some of us we need to reconnect to the Divine power Source. I believe there are four Biblically revealed power plants for us to connect to or in some cases reconnect to for an effective Gospel communication in the lives of dead sinners to see them brought from death unto life.

The first Divine power plant is the Word of God. I am always challenged at this in my life. When people come to me with objectives my tendency is to try and answer them with my wisdom instead of the wisdom of God. There are a number of reasons I believe the Lord blessed the ministry of Dr. Billy Graham. One happened right in the midst of his preaching as a result from a gigantic decision. There were two extraordinary gifted speakers for the Youth For Christ ministry as evangelists and one was Billy Graham. Another was a man who decided to step out of that ministry to go to a liberal seminary where he was inundated with German, radical, critical theory on the Bible and eventually he would say that the Bible at best contains the Word of God but would no longer say it is the Word of God. He would sit down and have long talks about this with Billy trying to tell Billy he was committing intellectual suicide to say that the Bible was infallible and inerrant as the Word of God.

Billy came back to him and said 'I'm not claiming that I can answer every objection you bring to me about the authority of God's Word but when I read the Word of God I read a Self-attesting authority that it is the Word of God. I'm not saying there aren't answers to your objections but I'm not at that point. I do know that this is the Word of God and I believe it's the Word of God.' You've probably seen the bumper sticker that says 'God said it (in His Word), I believe it and that settles it.' But if you think about that God said it and whether I believe it or not it doesn't change the fact that God said it and that settles it. This is God's Word, that settles it and thankfully I believe that. I hope and pray you believe that. Billy would repeat multiple times in every one of his sermons this ringing refrain, "The Bible says..." There is where our authority and power begins – in the power of the Word of God.

I want to substantiate this Biblically and not just historically in the life of just one itinerate evangelist. Let's look at Hebrews 4. There is this glorious text of what it means to enter into your rest and that rest is Jesus Christ who is the Lord of glory. Hebrews 4:12 says *[12] For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.* The Word of God is living, active and powerful. We have the power of the Word in us.

The first thing the writer of Hebrews says about the Word of God is that it's living. When I became a Christian at a church in North Carolina God used an evangelist that had come to speak from Texas. As my wife and I were attending church God was working pretty fiercely in me. A man who eventually became my spiritual father kept inviting me to these meetings that this man from Texas was speaking at. During the week I worked from 10am till 7pm and couldn't make it to these evening meetings. This man who kept inviting me said 'Can't you get off for these meetings?' I said "I can't lose my only job as a married man or I will lose my wife." He said "I'm going to pray that something will happen so that you can come." I said 'If something happens then I'll come.'

A week before the Friday the meetings started my boss came to me and said 'Harry, you have been doing such a good job so I'm going to move you to the first shift so you'll start at 7am and get off by 4:30pm.' Not only was I happy about my new shift but I realized I was going to

have to go to church every night next week. I'll never forget that in my life. God also used the man from Texas and him sharing his testimony in my life. His testimony had to do with how he loved to share the Gospel with people and he also enjoyed street preaching. The problem with street preaching is how do you get a crowd?

This man would go to a park, put his hat down, start running around it and say loudly, 'This thing is alive. I'm telling you it's alive. Look here. It's alive!' And that over a period of time would start getting a crowd. Then he would pick up his hat and underneath his hat was his New Testament Bible. He would open it up and start preaching. The Word of God is living, active and sharper than any two-edged sword. The Bible isn't a dead instrument but a living instrument.

Secondly, the Word of God is sharp. It is sharper than any two-edged sword. Notice the word 'any' for there is nothing sharper than the Word of God.

Thirdly, it is active. It does its work. It's not impotent. Every time you put the Bible out it accomplishes its purpose. Sometimes the purpose of God is to harden hearts and sometimes it is to soften hearts. From its work either comes an aroma of life unto life or death unto death. Our job is not the response that people bring for that's God's job.

When the text says 'than any two edged sword' it's referring to a Roman soldier with a broad sword which was a two handed sword but he would also have a smaller sword that had two edges on it. It had been sharpened for the purpose of face to face in-fighting, combat fighting so that it would cut going in and it had a different cut coming out. This is a two edged sword but there is no other two edged sword that is sharper than the Word of God. It cuts going in and it cuts coming out.

According to the text one cut is *piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow*. Joints and marrow are all just the same but yet somehow that this is so sharp that when it actively cuts it is even able to divide what seems to be indivisible. The immaterial you that is made in the image of God has multiple titles in the Bible. It's known as mind, heart, soul and spirit with each title having a different way of looking at the immaterial. You are a physical being and a spiritual being and it's even able to pierce that. The Word of God is piercing and can pierce what seems to be indivisible.

Secondly, the Word of God is discerning - *and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart*. Many times the Bible gives us a different view of heart than most of us have. Many times we'll say we don't want a mind religion but a heart religion. While the Bible has a turn of meaning between soul, spirit, mind and heart, it is still talking about the same thing. It is the immaterial you that is the spiritual you that is made in the image of God. Your physical you came in the image of your parents. In the image of God you have both mind and heart and the Word is able to go right to the heart of the matter and divide the thoughts and intentions of the heart. We think that you think in the mind and you feel in the heart but that's not what the Bible says.

Paul says in Ephesians 1:17-18, [17] *that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, [18] 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*. I know my heart better than I know your heart but I don't even know my heart and that's why I want to get into God's Word. It's so powerful it discerns the thoughts and intentions of the heart. It can go right to the heart of the matter. What are you thinking? What are your intentions? God's Word will always go to the thoughts and intentions of the heart so we need the power of God's Word.

God's Word pierces in such a way that it brings the bad news to our unregenerate heart and then it brings the Good News. This two edged sword works both ways to bring both the bad news and the Good News. Here is your heart. In the Word of God that is shared or preached or proclaimed to people God uses that in their lives to show them their heart. We need that powerful, living, active, sharper Word. Isaiah says that as the Word of God goes forth it always accomplishes its purposes. Jeremiah says it's like a hammer upon the rock that breaks the rock, it's so powerful. So the Word of God is the first power plant.

A second power plant is the Spirit of God. We have this amazing account of the resurrected Christ in Luke 24. Luke 24:44–49 says [44] *Then he said to them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled."* [45] *Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures,* [46] *and said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead,* [47] *and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.* [48] *You are witnesses of these things.* [49] *And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are **clothed with power from on high.**"*

Not only is the Spirit of God in you, but according to this text He clothes you with power. Personally He resides in you and is producing the fruit of the Spirit that you may walk in the Spirit but He is also putting on you and around you the clothing of His power. He does this for this purpose of being the witness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. So let's now go from the point of where Jesus affirmed the promise to His very clear command.

Let's go to Jesus' last post resurrection appearance in Acts 1. Acts 1:8 says [8] *But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.* They waited in the Upper Room as the Spirit of God fell upon them, clothed them with power and they went out and proclaimed the Gospel. As they did this 3,000 households came to Christ and then a little further it says people are coming to Christ every day because of this powerful presence of the Holy Spirit. In Acts 4 it says another 5,000 are coming to Christ and it is just counting the men. It says the Apostles were bearing witness with great power.

The same Holy Spirit that was in them is on you. The same power that clothed them, not for their apostolic function but for their witness, is on you. This power is not only available but it's necessary for you to be God's witness.

This brings me to the third power plant. Paul liked to call the Gospel 'the word of the cross.' I Corinthians 1:18 says [18] *For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.* The Gospel message is the power of God unto salvation. Let's look a little further. I Corinthians 1:23–25 says [23] *but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles,* [24] *but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.* [25] *For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.*

Paul will later take this power of God and develop it into an entire epistle. Romans 1:16–17 says [16] *For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.* [17] *For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith.* There is something definitive called the Gospel. Secondly, he says it's the power of God. Thirdly, he says it's the righteousness of God. Fourthly, he says it's inclusive for it saves everyone who

believes. Fifthly, he says it's exclusive for it is only those who believe that are saved. That's what he says about the Gospel.

I want to come back to just one of those. Paul says to the Roman Christian that he is not ashamed of the Gospel. I have often read that and thought how odd that is. I understand what he means for he won't be embarrassed by the Gospel but if you take the time to develop Romans 1 you will find the bad news to a society without the Gospel of grace described in Romans 1:18–34. In that description there is a three step downward spiral from idolatry to humanism to pantheism and always shows up by the judgment of God in sexual anarchy. First is sexual promiscuity, then sexual perversion and then the third step is social approval where they do those things shamelessly and declare them as normative. This not only brings God's judgment but it's the evidence of God's judgment. That is the backdrop to what Paul is saying. They shamelessly embrace the most heinous sins before God and in doing it they are attempting to make you ashamed of the Gospel.

So before Paul develops their shameless rebellion, he speaks of his shameless love of the Gospel. I tend to always use my wife as an illustration here. I can't ever remember introducing my wife and saying 'This is my wife Cindy and I'm not ashamed of her.' If I ever did do that it might be the last time I get the opportunity to introduce her. The only way that would make sense is if someone was trying to shame me. This is what is happening in a culture that is devoid of grace that Paul is addressing. They want to shame you into Gospel silence because Satan knows the Gospel is a power plant and he doesn't want anyone to get connected to it. In evangelism the wires of the power plant of the Gospel are in your hands not only to connect to you but through you to connect to other people by sharing the Gospel. Therefore Satan tries to create a culture to make us ashamed of the Gospel.

Oh no, *I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation!* So I will not be ashamed of this Gospel. So we have the Word of God, the Spirit of God and both of these bring the spear point of the Word of God to the Gospel of saving grace which is the power of God and this brings us to the fourth power plant of God which may be the most important of all, even though all four are important.

The fourth power plant is intercessory prayer to God. I highly recommend the book Power Through Prayer by E.M. Bounds. Bounds is from Washington, Georgia and was a Methodist minister. He lived in the 19th century and retired around the year 1870. When he retired he became the editor of the major publication of the Methodist church. He would write amazing things but his burden was prayer. James 4:3 says [3] *You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions.* He wanted people to pray and pray rightly, confidently and expectantly. He loved James 5 where it says the prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.

You might think, 'look at me' but remember your positional righteousness is what you trust in which is the righteousness of Jesus. You're not a perfect man, for you like Elijah who wasn't perfect but when he prayed literally waters rose. He was persistent in his prayer life and didn't just pray one time. He would pray as God directed him to pray according to the will of God and the Word of God that reveals things to us. Do you see how the Word of God, the Spirit of God, the Gospel of God and prayer to God are all crucial in our life?

We ask God to give us through prayer to give us the ability to use the Word of God to understand and share the Word of God. We ask God to give us the ability to proclaim the Gospel of God in prayer because we have an intolerable burden for people to come to Christ and we know they won't come to Christ without the power of prayer. Then we give ourselves to prayer

as the Divine power plant. We don't give glory to prayer but we give glory to God who answers prayer. But we thank God for His power plants. We plug into those power plants and attempt to plug others into those power plants. I'd like to look at one final text in Ephesians 6.

In Ephesians 6 there is this wonderful statement in the life of a Christian. Peter compares the Christian life to the sojourner's journey as elect exiles. Paul in Ephesians 6 compares the Christian life to be the soldier for Christ. He talks about the armor, the armory and where you get the armor which is from the Word of God. He talks about the armorer – who arms you with the armor. He talks about the Spirit of God and he lays out the armament. William Gurnall wrote a 700 page book on 11 verses in Ephesians titled The Christian in Complete Armor. The reason his book was so long was because he understood this as a body of Divinity of what the Christian life is. Bryan Zacharias wrote the distilled version of this titled The Embattled Christian. I have to outline Gurnall's book to read it but it is so rich.

Gurnall brings out the permeating presence of prayer in the armor of the Christian to live for Christ from this text in Ephesians 6. Do you want to be strong in the Lord? Remember this isn't an emotional battle but a spiritual battle and Satan does not want you to share the Gospel with your friends. Ephesians 6:10–20 says [10] *Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. [11] Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. [12] For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. [13] Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. [14] Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, [15] and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. [16] In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; [17] and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, [18] praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, [19] and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, [20] for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.*

Pray that you will speak boldly. Pray for one another that we will speak boldly. Paul asked that people would pray for him as a preacher of the Gospel that he would speak boldly. Thank the Lord for those sweet people that heard the call to pray for the preaching of the Word on the Lord's Day worship services. There have been some of who have told me they have really been blessed by the sermons these past few months and I said 'Praise the Lord! I can name about eight people you need to go thank for they intercede.' The intercessory prayers of God's people for preachers that they will proclaim the Gospel, for yourself to be bold with the Gospel and pray for one another that we together will be an army of witnesses for Jesus Christ declaring verbally to the world that Jesus saves.

As the hymn says;
*Lifted up was He to die;
It is finished! was His cry;
Now in Heav'n exalted high.
Hallelujah! What a Savior!*

Come to Him for everlasting life. Plug into those power plants. One of the hindrances is that we feel impotent and we don't have power but wait for your strength. Get the strength of the

Lord. Get the power of God. It comes through His Word, the presence of the Spirit of God who clothes you with power, through the Gospel and it comes through prayer as you call upon God. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the moments we could be in Your Word and examine all these glorious truths that You have given to us that we can share the Gospel. In some time before the Lord I want to ask you to do a couple of things. In order to plug in, you need to get into the Word daily to get into the Spirit of God for they work together and you need to pray because the Spirit of God works through the prayers of His people and enables the prayers of His people. You need the Word and prayer personally, in your family so that the Gospel and power of God will be known and shared with others. Then you need it corporately. If we are to be powerful, don't treat the gathering of God's people in worship as a matter of an a la carte menu where you take it if you feel like it or if you have enough time. Gather with God's people for there are the Divine power plants of the Gospel in a special way, that when we are gathered in the name of Christ the Spirit of God is not only in us individually but in us in a special way. You plug into the Word of God for the Gospel of God through prayer, the reading of the Word, the hearing of the Word and asking for the presence and power of the Holy Spirit who is in you to anoint you and clothe you with power. If you are a Christian you have been baptized and sealed with the Spirit, He dwells within you and is producing the fruit of the Spirit. Jesus, this world needs to hear of Your saving grace that which You bestowed upon us that is at work in us, get it through us to us with power from on high, through Your Word by Your Spirit with the Gospel as we lay hold of the throne of grace with the burden of prayer that it might avail much, in Jesus' Name, Amen.

Power Point

DIVINE POWER PLANTS

Power Plant #1 – The Word of God

Power Plant #2 – The Spirit of God

Power Plant #3 – The Gospel of God

Power Plant #4 – Prayer to God