

RTO™ School of Prayer

Prayer to a Superhero: Knowing the Power of God

by Dave Mozdin

“But Jesus answered them, ‘You are wrong, because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God.’” Matthew 22:29

“Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, for all that is in the heavens and in the earth is yours. Yours is the kingdom, O LORD, and you are exalted as head above all. Both riches and honor come from you, and you rule over all. In your hand are power and might, and in your hand it is to make great and to give strength to all. And now we thank you, our God, and praise your glorious name.” 1 Chronicles 29:11-13

In this second decade of the 21st century, we live in an age with a tremendous array of available entertainment. While our advanced technology enables us to do many things quickly and efficiently, it complicates our lives because we somehow believe that technological efficiency in and of itself will make our lives easier, better, and happier. For many people, this is simply not true. This discontent, coupled with having a lot of leisure time on our hands, which is another “advantage” of our technological state, can drive us to seek solace in entertainment.

One prevalent form of entertainment that has been most popular over many years is movies, and with the advent of internet, laptops, electronic tablets, smart phones, Androids, among others, access to movies is easier than ever. Movies come in all kinds of categories, historical, documentary, drama, comedy, romance, horror, science fiction, pornographic, westerns, action films, and superhero.

This last category I have listed, superhero, is most interesting because it is arguably the most popular of all categories. Let’s begin by defining a superhero. From studiobinder.com: “A superhero is a character with extraordinary powers that performs heroic actions. Unlike police, firefighters, or doctors, all of whom are heroes in their own right, superheroes are defined by their unique capabilities, such flight,

strength, speed or invincibility (to name a few).” Among the most popular superheroes are Superman, Batman, Thor, Black Panther, Spiderman, Iron Man, Hulk, Wonder Woman, and The Flash.

The immense popularity of superhero films is evidenced by how well they have performed at the box office; in other words, a lot of people are paying to see these movies. According to statistics quoted by Pastor and author Ron Matsen, “Of the 30 top highest grossing films of all times (as of the end of 2019), 18 are about either aliens or super humans saving the earth.” As of the end of 2023, the movie review site Rotten Tomatoes lists 7 superhero movies among the top 10 highest grossing, ranging from \$1.521 to \$2.924 *billion*.

What accounts for this superhero craze? Continuing the earlier quote from Matsen, who asks “Why?” “Because (super humans saving the earth) is a predominant theme. Most people will agree to one degree, or another the world has gone out of control and is mad. And therefore, there are those, who through superheroes of one kind or another, are waiting for mankind to be saved. And standing back one can say that we’re a plum waiting to be plucked, we’re ripe for that. (Think about this) Most of the focus on this type of entertainment is desiring someone other than a human being to save us. When you look back at it more demographically, the younger generation embraces that more vehemently than their parents because they see no hope. (One of the main reasons why I’m doing this teaching is to warn those of us who are parents or grandparents whose children or perhaps any of us might be overly attracted to superheroes). Some of them (actually) believe that world will be extinct in 12 years because of media/educational influence.”

“The Bible addresses this in 2 Thessalonians 2:7-12; (we’ll focus on vv. 7a, 9-12) ⁷For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work. ⁹The coming of the lawless one is by the activity of Satan with all power and false signs and wonders, ¹⁰and with all wicked deception for those who are perishing, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. ¹¹Therefore God sends them a strong delusion, so that they may believe what is false, ¹²in order that all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.’ Lawlessness in our world today is now similar in some ways to the time before the flood of Genesis 7:16-24. This (2 Thessalonians passage) is what the Bible predicts will take place.”

“And the way it will take place will be because the majority of the world will embrace false signs and wonders from (supposed) supernatural beings. (This does not seem far-fetched in our age of advancing Artificial Intelligence, known as AI). And God will send a strong delusion, v.11, “in order that all may be

condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness”, v.12. *The X-Files*, a popular science fiction television show from the 1990s, had a tag line which said, ‘The truth is out there’. The truth for us to know what has been, what is, and what will come is right here in the Bible. The answers (for us) are as clear as black and white.”

“There will be another incursion of (supposed) supernatural beings making inroads upon the earth and the unsaved earthlings want it because they don’t have a love of the truth for the gospel. They refuse to believe that God through Christ will save them. He’s the only One who can! We *will* have an extraterrestrial direct encounter someday, either with the (true) God of the universe or the angel of darkness.”

To summarize and build upon what Matsen has said, people do not know God, have no knowledge of and/or aren’t interested in knowing the one true, living, eternal Trinitarian Triune God, are greatly worried about the state of the world today, seek refuge in superheroes stories as a supernatural display of power to set things right in the perpetual battle of good and evil, which makes them very open to the ungodly influence of worldly leaders or influencers they perceive to “superheroes”. An argument can be made that an antichrist could be the superhero in this situation, leading many astray. At the end of the day, this still leaves them with no hope, only condemnation because they do not know or acknowledge Christ as Lord and Savior.

In several of these School of Prayer lessons, we have emphasized the importance of knowing who God is, the identity of His attributes, the awesome tremendous wonder of Him. Knowledge of Him is something HE desires, “For I desire mercy and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.” (Hosea 6:6). Matthew Poole’s commentary says, “heartily, affectionate knowledge of God, which fills the mind with reverence of his majesty, fear of his goodness, love of his holiness, trust in his promise, and submission to his will; knowledge of God’s law, the rule of our obedience, of his favour, the reward of our obedience, and knowledge of his omniscience,”. Also 2 Peter 1:3, “His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, *through the knowledge of Him* who called us to his own glory and excellence.” (Emphasis added.).

The subject attribute of this lesson, God’s power, is no less important. One of the attractions of superheroes in our culture is their unique capability of power to win the battle to save people. If we know *God’s* power, we will know that *He* is the one true supernatural superhero, the one who has been winning and will win the ultimate battle between good and evil, the battle to save us. We will not be

prone to the leading and influence of false leaders/teachers, even if they seem to exhibit supernatural type powers. We will acknowledge and live for GOD as the one who is all powerful, the one who will win, the one in whom we can completely place our faith and trust! Once God has spoken; twice have I heard this: that power belongs to God,”. (Psalm 62:11). Alleluia!

In understanding the power of God, we'll start with general revelation, that is, the things that He plainly reveals to us about His power, things that all people, saved or unsaved can plainly see. We will, of course rely upon His holy word, the Bible as the one and only source of truth to describe and explain His power as He decrees it. Please note that what is about to be listed here as various biblical illustrations of God's power, it is by no means an exhaustive list, but a list to help us understand the awesome nature of His power.

God's Power in Creation. We'll start at the beginning, Genesis 1, the very beginning of the Bible. The word “genesis” means origins and this first chapter of the Bible outlines the origins of many things (both good and bad) that set the tone for our existence with God. It doesn't take long to find God's power described in Genesis, it's His power of creation, and it begins with the very first ten words, “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.” That's a load of power right there! Think of the size of the earth, then the size of the heavens, all these years later astronomers *still* cannot determine its actual size because it is so huge. And day after day in those first six 24-hour days, God created light, separation of land from water, vegetation and seed bearing plants, the expanse between heaven and earth, lights to separate day from night (the sun and the moon), living creatures in the water and in the air and on the land, and finally, the crown of God's creation, man and woman, created in the image of God vv. 26-27. And He did it all by simply *speaking* these marvelous things into existence! Throughout Genesis 1:3-24, we read “And God said ...”, and before the creation of man and woman, v.26, “Then God said ...”, and it all was done!

The power of God in creation has been acknowledged and praised by His people throughout Scripture, “By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, and by the breath of His mouth all their host. He gathers the waters of the sea as a heap; He puts the deep in storehouses. Let all the earth fear the Lord; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him! For He spoke, and it came to be; He commanded and it stood firm.” (Psalm 33:6-9). “Men, why are you doing these things? We also are men, of like nature with you, and we bring you good news, that you should turn from these vain things to a living God, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them.” (Acts 14:15). “The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth”. (Acts 17:24).

“Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created.” (Revelation 4:11).

God’s Power in Destruction. Whereas God’s power in creation is by His grace and for His good pleasure, His power in destruction is most often for His wrath. The wrath of God is a definite attribute, but in today’s feel-good culture, even in the church, it is not mentioned much or even at all, yet the Bible is very definitive about it. Theologian Arthur W. Pink has written, “As we turn to them (the Scriptures) we find that God has made no attempt to conceal the facts concerning His wrath. He is not ashamed to make it known that vengeance and fury belong unto Him.” This is most clearly illustrated in Deuteronomy 32:15-43, and we’ll highlight v. 22, “For a fire is kindled by my anger, and it burns to the depths of Sheol, devours the earth and its increase, and sets on fire the foundations of the mountains.”

The most obvious and earliest example is the great flood in Genesis 6-7, which again presents evidence of Genesis showing the origin of God’s wrath in destruction. “The waters prevailed above the mountains, covering them fifteen cubits deep. And all flesh died that moved on the earth, birds, livestock, beasts, all swarming creatures that swarm on the earth, and all mankind. Everything on the dry land in whose nostrils was the breath of life died. He blotted out every living thing that was on the face of the ground, man and animals and creeping things and birds of the heavens. They were blotted out from the earth. Only Noah was left, and those who were with him in the ark. And the waters prevailed on the earth 150 days” (Gen. 7:20-24). God’s power in destruction, that was a massive showing of God’s power in His wrath.

Other examples of God’s power in destruction in His wrath include the fall of Jericho, Joshua 6:15-21, the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. of which Christ prophesied in Matthew 24:1-2, 29-30, the future Seven Seals, trumpet, and bowl judgments of Revelation 6, 8, 9, 16.

We could spend more time providing examples of God’s power in creation, preservation, “... He upholds the universe by the word of His power.” (Hebrews 1:3), and destruction, however, we will now focus on what we believe is the most significant display and the most important element of His power, that is, His power in the spiritual realm.

God’s Power in the Gospel of Jesus Christ for Salvation. Romans 1:16, “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.” 2 Corinthians 4:5, 7: “For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with

ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake . . . But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us."

God's Power in Condemnation. Luke 12:4-5, spoken by Christ: "I tell you, my friends, do not fear those who kill the body, and after that have nothing more that they can do. But I will warn you whom to fear: fear him who, after he has killed, has authority to cast into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him!" In the battle of good vs. evil, what superhero movie character can do that? James 4:12, "There is only one lawgiver and judge, He who is able to save and to destroy."

God's Power in Appointing Government Rulers on Earth. Daniel 2:37, as he speaks to King Nebuchadnezzar, "You, O king, the king of kings, to whom the God of heaven has given the kingdom, the power, and the might, and the glory ...". Christ speaking to Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor: (John 19:10-11 NKJV) "Then Pilate said to Him, 'Are You not speaking to me? Do You not know that I have power to crucify You, and power to release You?' Jesus answered, 'You could have no power at all against Me unless it had been given you from above.'" Romans 13:1 (NKJV), "Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority (power) except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God."

God's Power in Working Signs and Wonders in His People. Acts 5:12, "Now many signs and wonders were regularly done among the people by the hands of the apostles." Acts 6:8, "And Stephen, full of grace and power, was doing great wonders and signs among the people." These included miracle healings of physical and spiritual maladies, raising people from the dead, and escaping sure death situations. While we, in our present age, rarely if ever see or experience such spectacular displays of God's power, we can be used by God to show His power through us in subtle ways such as leading lost people to saving faith in Christ, in sanctifying people through helping them escape from the bondage of stronghold sins (addictions) or helping them through trials that seem impossible to those who are not a part of God's kingdom here on earth.

God's Power to Help us in our Weaknesses and Our Trials. Isaiah 40:29, "He gives power to the faint, and to him who has no might He increases strength". 2 Corinthians 9:12, "But he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me." 2 Timothy 1:7, "for God gave us a spirit not of fear, but of power and love and self-control." For this verse, John MacArthur writes;

“Positively, God has already given believers all the spiritual resources they need for every trial and threat.” Isn’t that comforting and encouraging?

God’s Power to Help Us to Live According to His Nature and to Escape from the World and Sin.

2 Peter 1:3-4: “His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.”

God’s Power Through the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit gives us power in witnessing, Acts 1:8, “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.” The Holy Spirit is employed to help believers to be filled with all the fullness of God, Ephesians 3:16-17, 19: “that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love ... and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.” The Holy Spirit also helps us in our sure biblical hope in God, Romans 15:13, “May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.”

God’s Power Through His Son Jesus Christ. The pre-incarnate Christ was present during God’s acts of creation: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made ... And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us”. (John 1:1-3, 14). After the incarnate Christ’s three-year ministry on earth, His death and resurrection, and just before His ascension into heaven, as He begins to give His disciples what we know as the Great commission, Christ makes a truly stunning statement about His status, saying, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.” (Matthew 28:18). Did you get that? **ALL** authority. Authority is another word for power, the Oxford Dictionary defines authority as “the power or right to give orders, make decisions, and enforce obedience.” Also, “a person or organization having power or control in a particular, typically political or administrative sphere.” For Christ, this “all authority” extends to BOTH “in heaven AND on earth.” (emphasis added). This authority was given to Him by the Father, “... whom He appointed heir of all things ...” (Hebrews 1:2).

During His time on earth, Christ's power is shown in the physical, "And all the crowd sought to touch him, for power came out from him and healed them all." (Luke 6:19), and the spiritual, "What is this word? For with authority and power he commands the unclean spirits, and they come out!" (Luke 4:36). Christ's power was shown in creation, the miracle of feeding 5000 or more from two fishes and five loaves of bread, recorded in all four gospel accounts. Christ's power is shown in destruction: "As they passed by in the morning, they saw the fig tree withered away to its roots. And Peter remembered and said to him, 'Rabbi, look! The fig tree that you cursed has withered.'" Mark 11:20-21

God's power worked in Christ in concert with the Holy Spirit, Acts 10:38, "how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him."

God's power will be plainly evident in Christ in His Second Coming: "Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory" (Matthew 24:29-30). "Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power" (1 Corinthians 15:24). Just like the typical ending of a basic superhero movie, only this is REAL and it *will* happen!

God's Power in Resurrection. We've saved the best for last here, as we believe that God's power is most strongly, most compellingly, most convincingly, most amazingly revealed in the resurrection from the dead, both physically and spiritually. Throughout Scripture, there were instances of God's power in resurrection from the dead, such as Elijah raising the son of the widow of Zarephath (1 Kings 17:17-24), Christ raising the son of the widow of Nain (Luke 7:11-15), the daughter of Jairus (Mark 5:21-24, 35-43, Luke 8:40-42, 49-56), and Lazarus, who had been in the tomb four days (John 11:1-44), an undeniable act of resurrection. Yet God's greatest outworking of His resurrection power was His resurrection of Christ from the dead on the third day, which was power that was of God, by God and through *God alone*, "And God raised the Lord ..." (1 Corinthians 6:14), "... according to the working of His mighty power which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places" (Ephesians 1:19-20, NKJV).

And even beyond that, God makes this resurrection power which He worked in Christ available to us who believe (Ephesians 1:19, to be detailed shortly). It is only available to those who have repented, that is, made a firm commitment to turn away from their own evil way, admit that they are sinners who need to embrace Jesus Christ by faith for the forgiveness of their sins. Then they will avoid the wrath of God in eternal hell, (and remember, God is not slack in carrying out His wrath and power in destruction when it is right to do) receive the Holy Spirit and be welcomed into His Kingdom of eternal joy and peace. If you have not made this commitment to Christ, please do so now, as we never know when God will call us from this world (our inevitable death, Hebrews 9:27, “And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment,”) and then it will be too late.

As God has worked His resurrection power in Christ, He has simultaneously made it available to us, His children. Going back to Ephesians 1:19-21 (NKJV): “and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come.” Do you see that? The exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, exceeding, which means surpassing, extraordinary, extreme, to us! In the ESV Study Bible notes, we read, “Paul piles up ‘power words’ to express the immeasurable (exceeding) greatness of God’s power, His mighty power toward believers. Power over supernatural forces through magic and the occult was a great concern in ancient Ephesus, but the power of the living God in Christ trumps all competing authorities.” Our superheroes, past, present, and future can’t even come close!

And what does His resurrection power toward us do for us? Ephesians 2:1-2, 4-6, “And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air ... But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” Romans 8:11, “If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.” This is also another instance Holy Spirit power helping both Christ and the believer.

As just noted, His power towards us helps us in our salvation, helps us in our weakness and our trials, helps us to live according to God’s nature and to escape from the world and sin, everything we need for life and godliness, that is, a practical awareness of God in every situation. We’ll note here that we are,

in effect, aliens ourselves, 1 John 3:1, "... the world does not know us ...", as John MacArthur writes, "The real aliens in the world are not extraterrestrials but Christians. Having been born again, given a new nature of heavenly origin, Christians display a nature like their Savior and Heavenly Father; a nature totally foreign (other worldly) to the unsaved. No wonder Scripture describes Christians as 'exiles' and 'strangers' (Heb 11:13, 1 Peter 1:1, 2:11). The Lord Jesus was unearthly in origin, and so are those born again."

God's resurrection power through Christ extends to each one of us, as Christ Himself decrees in John 5:25-29: "Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son also to have life in Himself. And He has given Him authority (power) to execute judgment, because He is the Son of Man. Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear His voice and come out (resurrection), those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment." After knowing this, surely you know what type of resurrection you would want. So "Believe on the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved ..." (Acts 26:31). "Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life" (John 5:24).

APPLICATION

We'll frame this in terms of the three "A's." First, **Acknowledge God's power**, responding with worship, pray Bible verses which acknowledge God's power in worship. You can pray 1 Chronicles 29:11-13, the key verse of this lesson, other verses include Revelation 4:11 and 19:1 (look them up!) . Second, **Access God's power** within you, walking with Him in daily time in His word, the Bible, to know Him and His power, remembering Hosea 6:6 more fully. Don't be the one to whom Christ says, "You are wrong, because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God." Third, **Apply what you've learned** in the outworking of His power in you, doing all you do, whatever you do, for His glory and for His kingdom here on earth (1 Corinthians 10:31, Colossians 3:17).

Such outworking of tremendous divine power can only come from the One who is beyond the greatest Superhero we could ever imagine, the one True Living, Triune Trinitarian Glorious God. "Salvation and glory and power belong to our God,". (Revelation 19:1). Amen and Alleluia!

Questions or comments? Please contact dmozdin.dfp@gmail.com

**The above content was developed by Dave Mozdin and presented
at Radical Time Out™ on April 11, 2024.**

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