

The Sovereign Power of God
Pastor Deborah Oakley - GFC – 11/17/19

If you were to describe your Christian life would you say you live a victorious life?
Is your life defined more by victory than by failure?
Are you an overcomer who lives in the power of the spirit?
Are you going from strength to strength?

If you answered no to any of these questions today's message can totally change your life. You know how I know? Because today I'm sharing about The Sovereign Power of God.

And I'm here to tell you that without the sovereign power of God in our lives nothing will ever change. We won't change, and our circumstances won't change. But with the sovereign power of God everything changes.

His sovereign power turns our pain into joy.
Our defeat into victory.
Our weakness into strength.
Our loss into gain.
Our worry into rest.
Our fear into faith. And on and on.

So, I want to begin by sharing a story of God's sovereignty in my life. To this day this is the greatest act of God's sovereignty I've ever experienced. And it changed my whole life.

I was 16 years old and was raised in a very abusive home. My parents divorced and my mother and stepfather were alcoholics. I was physically, emotionally, and sexually abused. As a result, I was doing drugs, drinking, skipping school, and hanging with the wrong crowds. I was living a very worldly life and basically, my life was a mess.

Then one day, seemingly out of nowhere, a thought came to me: "I am going to do something with my life; I'm not going to end up like my parents." Somewhere deep inside of me I knew only God could help me. There was this voice deep inside that told me that only God was the answer for what my soul was longing for.

So, I decided to go to church. I woke up, lit up a cigarette, smoked it, jumped out of bed, got dressed and walked to church. Now to me, that is the sovereign power of God. I went from a rebellious brat of a teenager who was sinning all over the place to hearing a voice telling me to go to church.

That day in a small Southern Baptist Church, I gave my life to Christ. But it doesn't end here.

As I gave my life to the Lord a young man in the congregation saw me. We have now been married 45 years. So, I met Joe and Jesus on the same day.

My life changed that day because of the sovereignty of God. I think about it a lot. There is no telling who or where I would be today if it had not been for the sovereign power of God in my life. I know without any doubt that I could not have overcome the devastation of my past without the healing, changing, restoring, sovereign power of God.

Throughout my life I have experienced many sovereign moves of God. I like to call them God appointments. It's when God puts us in the right place at just the right time. Proverbs 16:9 says:

In his heart a man plans his course, but the Lord determines his steps.

When I was pregnant with our daughter, we went to a child birth class and ran into a couple from Shady Grove Church – Kirk and Debby Dearman. They invited us to the church and the rest is history. Shady Grove Church changed our lives, taught us about God, and introduced us to the people that have been our mentors and dearest friends for 40 years.

Twenty years ago, we were looking to buy a house. After years of looking I just happened to see a new sub-division that's 4 minutes from here where I found my dream house. If we hadn't found that house, it's very likely we might not have started this church.

These God appointments changed my life forever. Some of you are this close (use fingers to demonstrate) to your God appointment. But never forget that it will happen God's way, in God's time, by God's authority, with God's power, for your good and for God's glory! You can't tell God how to do it, you can't rush it, and you can't control it. Only the power of God can make it happen.

You see, sovereignty and power always go together. Sovereignty means two things: to be the supreme authority and to be free from external control. Sovereignty literally means "super power" or "the highest authority."

Only God is sovereign. He alone has supreme authority and He alone is totally free from external control. No one controls God. There is never a time when God is out of control – or when someone or something else has control over God. You see - There is a God and you're not Him. 2 Samuel 7:22 says:

How great you are, O Sovereign Lord! There is no one like You, and there is no God but You.

You see God can do whatever He chooses, whenever He chooses, wherever He chooses, however He chooses, why ever He chooses. He is not limited by anything and nothing or no one can hinder Him!

He rules the universe with all power and authority at all times. He is His own reason for His actions. He doesn't have to ask permission of anyone. Psalm 115:3 says:

Our God is in heaven; He does whatever He pleases.

God doesn't have to explain Himself to anyone. He is on the throne. He rules. He's the boss. He is large and in charge. God has absolute control over everything and everyone, everywhere in the entire universe. 1 Chronicles 29:11-12 says:

Yours, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendor, for everything in heaven and earth is Yours. Yours, O Lord, is the kingdom; You are exalted as head over all. Wealth and honor come from You; You are the ruler of all things. In Your hands are strength and power to exalt and give strength to all. He is the supreme ruler over man, angels and all creation.

For God to be the sovereign ruler over all things He must be Omnipotent. Omnipotent means He is all powerful. In order for God to rule absolutely He must have absolute power. Revelation 19:6 says:

And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty thunderings, saying, "Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns!"

In this passage John connects God's rule with His power. But here's the thing. As humans we want to have power and be in control. We want to rule our lives and determine our own outcomes. But that is proof that we don't really trust God as our sovereign ruler. It means we really think we are more capable of controlling our lives than He is.

And that's when we get into trouble: when we try to control things. But we do it because we haven't had a true revelation of the sovereignty of God. Because if we knew how powerful God is - we wouldn't even dream of trying to take control.

For me it's usually when I try to control things that I realize how little control I actually have. That's when I realize that something in me still believes that I am powerful enough to manage the outcomes in my life.

I think I can convince others to do what I want or to make right choices. The truth is we can't even change ourselves, so how do we expect to change others.

I am a very determined and strong person that doesn't quit. I used to say, "I'm going to do this or that even if it kills me." And you know what... it killed me. And that was a good thing. God just let me fall on my face until I gave up my illusions of being so strong and in control. Because instead of trusting in MY ability I'm learning to put my trust in God's sovereign and awesome power.

Because I've tried and I failed but God never fails. And when I quit trusting in myself God shows Himself strong on my behalf. But I had to decrease so He could increase.

And that is exactly what happened in Judges 6 with Gideon. An angel of the Lord came to Gideon at a time when God's people were being ruled by the Midianites. And he tells Gideon that God is going to use him to deliver His people. At the very moment Gideon is hiding from the enemy, the angel tells him in Judges 6:12:

The Lord is with you, mighty warrior.

But Gideon doesn't feel like a mighty warrior. For seven years Midian had attacked Israel. They took their food, their livestock and destroyed their land. So, Israel was weak, poor and hungry...that's why Gideon was in the field gleaning wheat when God spoke to him...he was getting food to eat.

Also, Gideon didn't think too highly of himself or his family. In Judges 6:15 Gideon says:

My clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my family.

Gideon feels that he is the weakest of the weak, but God tells him to go in the strength he has. Sometimes we too must go in the strength we have. Because when we do, God will give us more strength. In Judges 6:16 God says to Gideon:

I will be with you, and you will strike down all the Midianites together.

But Gideon is still not convinced, so he set out a fleece and through that God confirms his call on Gideon. But then God does something that seems counterproductive. He tells Gideon his army is too big. Why? Because if they win, they will think that their own strength saved them.

Isn't that just what we do! We think because we have a degree, or money or talent or skills or we live in a prosperous country...that it's our own strength that saves us. We take the credit and fail to recognize that it was the sovereign power of God that won the victory.

So, God tells Gideon to reduce the size of His army. He tells Him to send away everyone who is afraid. This reduces the army from 22 thousand to 10 thousand. But God says that's still too many. So, God tells him to go to the water and separate those who lap up the water with their tongues like a dog from those who kneel down to drink.

So, 300 lapped with their tongues and God says to Gideon in Judges 7:7:

With the three hundred men that lapped I will save you and give the Midianites into your hands.

And that's exactly what happened. Judges 8:28 says:

Midian was subdued before the Israelites and did not raise its head again. During Gideon's lifetime, the land enjoyed peace forty years.

So, the army had to decrease and then God increased. Gideon had to trust in God's sovereign power!

That means he had to submit to God's authority and do things God's way and not his way - even when it seemed impossible. And when he did, he saw the power of God defeat his enemy.

Webster's Dictionary defines power as "ability to do, act, produce or affect strongly." As Christians, we need the ability to do the things God asks of us, act the way God commands us, produce the life God intends for us, and affect others in a way that impacts them for Christ.

But, we can do none of these things in our own strength! We need a power greater than our own - and that power is the power of the Holy Spirit.

In the New Testament, the word translated power is the word *dunamis*. It means ability, might, power, force, strength. It is the root word for our words-*dynamic*, which means a force that produces change and *dynamite*, which is a powerful explosive force.

In other words, where there is Holy Spirit power, people change! That's how you know you've encountered the power of the Holy Spirit - you change, you go away different. Things you couldn't do before, you can now do. Things you shouldn't do, you now have the power to actually not do.

We all need this power. Believing in Jesus is not enough and knowing the Word is not enough. Jesus spent three years with His disciples and taught them His Word. They were believers who knew the Word - but that was not enough.

No - Jesus told His disciples that they needed something more. They needed the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit. At the end of His ministry Jesus said this to His disciples in Acts 1:8

But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you.

Evidently, the disciples needed a power that was more than the power of having believed in Jesus. They needed something more than the power of spending time with Jesus. They needed to be baptized in the Holy Spirit.

The supernatural power of the Holy Spirit transformed the disciples from cowards hiding from the authorities to courageous preachers of the Gospel.

- Where they had been fearful – they were now bold.
- Where they had been hiding – they were now preaching in the streets.
- Where they had been weak – they were now powerful.

And the Holy Spirit has the power to transform us - but most of us depend on ourselves and our own power. Eventually we find out that in our own we are powerless – helpless.

That was certainly true of me. I lived years of my Christian life depressed and defeated. The abuse from my childhood caused strongholds that I couldn't get free from. One day I was driving down Shady Grove Rd. and God asked me - "Do you really want to change? Can you believe I have the power to change you?" I'll never forget that moment – God showed me that I was believing lies and that His truth would set me free. Suddenly I felt empowered.

My change started with grieving over the abuse that happened in my childhood. I remember one day I was crying my heart out to God. Suddenly God's presence filled the room. I felt this peace and I knew God was there. In that moment I was supernaturally changed by the power and presence of God.

But I had to walk it out daily by God's power. God had to tear down years of lies and misbeliefs. But God took my mess and made it my message. Now, when I share how God healed me, it gives life and hope to others who have been hurt.

You see, the supernatural power of the Spirit can bring life out of death.
 Healing out of hurt.
 Hope out of despair.
 Joy out of sorrow.
 Power out of weakness.

You can do some things in your natural strength, but supernatural power comes from the power of the Holy Spirit.

You can change some things in your natural strength, but true change comes from the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit.

Yes, we have choices to make and work to do, but we know that this power is not of ourselves, but from the Holy Spirit. Zechariah 4:6 says:

"Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit," says the Lord Almighty.

No matter how hurt you are, the sovereign power of God can heal you.
 No matter how bound up you are, the power of God can free you.
 No matter how down you are, the power of God can lift you.
 No matter how dry you are, the power of God can refresh you.
 No matter how empty you are, the power of God can fill you.

That's the key – being filled with the Spirit of God.

Do you need a sovereign move of God in your life today?

Than ask Him.

He can heal your disease, provide what you need, and turn your life around.

He is sovereign and all-powerful and there is nothing too difficult for Him.

He bows before no one - but at His name every knee will bow!

He is the first, the last and beside Him there is no other!

He's teacher of all teachers and the ruler of all rulers!

He's the leader of all leaders and the boss of all bosses!

He's the authority of all authorities!

He is the King of all Kings and the Lord of all Lords!

And He is worthy of all praise!