

Real Power

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[0 : 0 0] Good morning, brothers and sisters. Great to be here with you. And if you're new with us this morning, my name's Josh. We'll just spend a moment looking at that passage together.

And you'll find an outline of what I'm going to say inside your bulletins as well, if that's helpful. I wonder if you've ever been in the presence of real power. Something or someone so powerful that you were genuinely scared to be there.

We are, of course, naturally afraid of power. I remember once visiting the Rhine Falls in Switzerland and just hearing the noise of the raging waters of the Rhine as they were tumbling over the rocks.

It was genuinely intimidating. It was awe-inspiring. I don't know if I've got a picture there for you, do I? Maybe. I'm not sure. Can you see these tiny little people here?

You know, that was me. You're kind of dangling over these awesomely powerful waters, hoping that someone's engineering skills were up to scratch. And this pathway is going to hold you up.

[1 : 0 3] Perhaps you've been somewhere similar. I mean, the Rhine Falls are kind of small compared to the great Niagara Falls of North America or the Victoria Falls in Africa. Just the immense power on display in these places.

And, of course, the waters are kind of predictable. So you know that you are safe as long as you keep your distance. But if you were to slip, if you were to go too close to the edge, there would be no escape.

There comes a point when resistance is futile and you are at the mercy of the river. And very often nature is like that, isn't it? It's incredibly powerful and it makes us feel small.

But there are all sorts of different kinds of power and, you know, different angles to consider, which we're not really going to scratch the surface of. But, you know, there's sort of psychological power, social, relational influence, political power.

And there's spiritual power. And power can be used for great good and for great evil. It can be used to create and destroy. There's nothing inherently wrong about power. Although it is a fearful thing.

[2 : 0 9] But there's power that we can tame, we can channel and we can use. And then there's power that is just above and beyond us. And knowing the difference can be a matter of life and death.

When, you know, when you thought something was tameable or controllable, but then it just got out of hand. A tiny match that ignites a bushfire or a tiny device in the palm of your hand.

And, you know, who knows what havoc those things have wreaked across the world. Great power means great possibilities. Great possibilities for good. But great danger as well.

So the passage before us this morning is about power and about fear. The key verse, I think, is in chapter 19, verse 17. Almost at the end of the passage.

But you see, this is where I hope we are heading this morning. Towards a right fear of the phenomenal power of the Lord Jesus. I think if we are listening to Dr. Luke this morning, the author of the book of Acts, that's where he wants us to end up as he recounts these things for us.

[3 : 15] He's trying to lead us towards a right fear of the phenomenal power of the Lord Jesus. It's not a fear we have to panic about. You know, it's like standing by the edge of a mighty waterfall.

Thankfully, in his way, Jesus is predictable because his character is always the same. He's not erratic. And he is good as long as you take him seriously.

He is glorious and majestic and beautiful. And when we do fear him rightly, we can also enjoy him and love him. And praise the Lord, he liberates us from all of our other fears.

So we've got a lot to get through this morning. Just like last week, there are five main sections, I think, to cover. In verse 23, Paul begins his third missionary journey.

Remember last week, we left him back in Antioch on home assignment. Well, in verse 23, presumably after CMS summer school, he heads out again. After spending some time there, he departed and went from one place to the next through the region of Galatia and Phrygia, strengthening all the disciples.

[4 : 22] Now, again, hopefully I've got a map for you. So we don't know the exact route that he went, but he's moving up something like this along the Roman road. Taking off in Syrian Antioch down in the southeast there, moving northwest through Galatia, towns like Derbe, Lystra, and Iconium, all places that we've seen him go before in the book of Acts, and established churches there.

And then Phrygia is further west. And notice what he was doing. He was strengthening all the disciples. See, disciples easily weaken, don't we?

It takes no effort to weaken. It's like entropy. If you don't put any energy into your Christian life, you will weaken. That's a guarantee. So disciples are easily disheartened and discouraged.

And so Paul's missionary work was not always about making new disciples, making new converts, just to let them wither and die, but about strengthening and encouraging and supporting and establishing disciples as well, kind of confirming them so they would be able to stand up during times of testing or temptation.

I think it's worth remembering that in our zeal for evangelism. It's no good producing sort of shallow disciples whose faith will simply wither away.

[5 : 37] Our goal here at SLBC needs to be to see people converted, of course, but also nurtured and nourished and strengthened in the faith so that they go the distance and so that they bring honor and glory to the Lord Jesus in every area of their lives.

Sometimes people talk as if evangelism is really where it's at, and anything that seems too deep or too detailed is really just a waste of time. Why are we being so academic?

Why do we need people learning about and thinking about the Trinity or predestination or the book of Jeremiah or whatever it is, you know, when there are souls that need to be saved?

But of course, we do need people thinking about those things, and that's why God has given us to them in the Scriptures, to help strengthen us, grow us, mature us, so that our faith stands the test of time.

We're not just converted, but we're saved fully and finally on the last day. Now, meanwhile, in verse 24, while we leave Paul on the road, Luke wants to take us across to Ephesus to meet a man named Apollos.

[6 : 43] And Luke tells us Apollos was a Jew, a native of Alexandria in Egypt, and he was an eloquent man, competent in the Scriptures. Literally, he was a man of words. He was skillful in his words.

And he was powerful in the Scriptures, or strong in the Scriptures. And interestingly, he had been instructed in the way of the Lord, and being fervent in spirit, or literally it's boiling in spirit, probably in his spirit rather than the Holy Spirit, although that's kind of a line ball.

But being kind of boiling in his spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus, though he knew only the baptism of John.

Now, this is probably one of those things where, because John was so good at his job and so successful, I think we've forgotten about him. Remember John the Baptist in John chapter 3, when his disciples came to him worried that Jesus was growing in popularity and stealing the show from John.

Remember, John said, I am not the Christ, but I have been sent before him. He must increase, but I must decrease. And John, in many ways, got exactly what he wanted.

[7 : 58] Jesus stands alone as the towering figure over his generation, and the towering figure over all of history. John's desire was not to point to himself, but to glorify Jesus, to shine a spotlight on him, to play him in with a drum roll.

And that's what John did. So he takes up hardly any space in the New Testament, while Jesus takes center stage. But it's worth remembering, historically speaking, that John was a phenomenon before Jesus was on the scene.

Matthew tells us that Jerusalem and all Judea and all the region about the Jordan were going out to him. And they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.

I mean, that is striking in its comprehensiveness, isn't it? That language that Matthew uses, such universal language. This thing was bigger than the Billy Graham Crusades. Matthew tells us, everyone went out.

Every man and his dog. Imagine the first prophet in 400 years. And he had an extraordinary message. Not promises exactly, but it's time.

[9 : 04] It's now. Get ready. And many people did. Many, many people were baptized by him, and they were primed for the arrival of the Messiah. And one such man, apparently, was Apollos.

Now, we don't know how Apollos came into contact with John, or exactly what he was preaching, but he seems, at least, to have got the idea that John was on about Jesus. And Luke tells us, he taught accurately the things concerning Jesus.

I presume Apollos was going around saying things like, Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, or something like that. Jesus is the Christ. John was not the Christ.

He was preparing the way for Jesus, or something like that. Except that, apparently, Apollos was lacking in one area. At the end of verse 25, he knew only the baptism of John.

Now, John, of course, had taught about two baptisms, or maybe even three. So, in Luke chapter 3, for instance, let me pick it up in verse 15. As the people were in expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Christ, John answered them all, saying, I baptize you with water.

[10 : 14] But he who is mightier than I is coming, the strap of whose sandals I'm not worthy to untie, he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit, and fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand to clear his threshing floor, and to gather the wheat into his barn.

But the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire. So, with many other exhortations, he preached good news to the people. See, John downplayed the significance of his own baptism, which was about repentance and preparation for the nation of Israel.

But what he really wanted people to know about, to focus on, were the baptisms of the Christ, that he would baptize with the Holy Spirit, and with fire.

It seems that Apollos missed this strand in John's teaching. So, he began to speak boldly in the synagogue, but when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside, and explained to him the way of God more accurately.

I really like that. Isn't that helpful? Perhaps it's just because I'm a preacher, but this whole scene really warms my heart. Just try to imagine that for a moment, you know, how that conversation went.

[11 : 26] I sort of imagine that they invited him around one afternoon for a cup of tea, and they sat down with him, and they thanked him for his teaching, and then they said to him, Now, dear brother, or young brother, as Keith virtually likes to call me.

Now, dear brother, I don't think you've been saying anything wrong about Jesus. Certainly not. You've been right on the money. But did you ever hear John talk about the baptism of the Holy Spirit?

Do you remember that? Were you there for that bit? It was at an NYC or something. And Apollos says, No? What's that about? And Priscilla says to him, Look, come with me to Ezekiel 36.

Listen to verse 26. God says, And I will give you a new heart and a new spirit I will put within you. And then Aquila says to him, And look over the page. Have you read about the valley of dry bones?

And then Priscilla chimes in again, and they go to Joel chapter 2 and Isaiah 32. And, you know, Apollos sits back, gobsmacked, lapping it all up, taking notes. You know, he starts asking questions.

[12 : 31] He's engaging with them. Oh, is that what Isaiah 61 is about? Of course. And by the end of the conversation, you see Apollos, because Priscilla and Aquila have been so wise, I guess, tactful, perhaps, Apollos has been so humble, just eager to learn.

You know, it's just, it seems to me that at the end of the conversation, Apollos goes home so much better equipped to keep speaking the word boldly. This is what the church is supposed to be like, isn't it?

This is the church functioning as a healthy family at its very best. People speaking the truth in love to one another. Speaking graciously, speaking wisely, enthusiastic to know the scriptures and to know God better, to share insights with one another, humble and ready to listen and learn and grow.

Age doesn't get in the way. Apollos' fame doesn't get in the way. Gender doesn't get in the way. It doesn't always work out like that in church life.

But in the case of Apollos, it seems he went from strength to strength. They had a wonderful conversation. And so in verse 27, he continued on his way over to Achaia, which of course is where we saw Paul last week.

[13 : 58] That's where Corinth is. And he continued to powerfully preach the word. In fact, notice how he helped the saints. How did he greatly help the believers? By powerfully refuting the Jews in public, showing by the scriptures that the Christ was Jesus.

The word powerful there, again, has to do with intense emotion, expressing intense emotion. So Apollos wasn't an Englishman. Apollos spoke vigorously, vehemently.

That is as good as I can do it. And what did he do? He refuted the Jews. That is, he attacked their viewpoint. The word means to confute or overwhelm in argument.

To prove a person wrong. To prove a person or an assertion or an accusation wrong. He thoroughly invalidated their teaching.

He exposed it as weak and strong. Weak and wrong. And I think, in our own day and age, with the rise of postmodernism and relativism, what we need to think about is that actually we would, I wonder if we might be sitting there finding this whole thing rather uncomfortable.

[15 : 15] You know, Apollos, why didn't you try to win the people, not just the argument? But of course, that's our problem, really. Certainly the Lord Jesus and the apostles and Apollos here all tried to win arguments.

And the Christians in Achaia were encouraged when Apollos won his arguments. Because it's important that the truth is proclaimed and that error is called out.

Not just that everyone gets along. And Apollos didn't just defend his own viewpoint or the Christian viewpoint, but he proved that the Jews were wrong.

Now in chapter 19, then Apollos is over in Achaia. But we move back to Paul in Ephesus. Coming from Pisidian Antioch, he would have moved into Phrygia almost immediately.

Then most likely, he would have taken the road down through Laodicea. It actually bypasses Colossae. Though you can't quite tell on the map there, but that's subtly important. And then he went on to Ephesus, which was the major city on the coast.

[16 : 23] You remember this is Paul's second visit to Ephesus. He stopped in briefly back in chapter 18. And when they asked him to stay for a longer period, he declined. But on taking leave of them, he said, I will return to you if God wills.

So evidently, it was God's will for him to return to Ephesus. Ephesus had a population of about 250,000 people. So it was even bigger than Corinth. A huge temple to the goddess Artemis, which was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world.

And there was also a grand amphitheater, which you can still go and visit today. And there was probably a fairly large Jewish community. So when Paul first arrived in Ephesus, Luke tells us he ran into a bunch of disciples there who, like Apollos, right?

I wonder if Apollos was a leader among them. But anyway, like Apollos, they had only been baptized into John's baptism and they didn't know anything about the baptism of the Holy Spirit. So take a look at verse 4.

And Paul said, John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him. That is Jesus. On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

[17 : 32] And when Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them and they began speaking in tongues and prophesying. There are about 12 men in all. So again, we're watching a handover that we're not used to seeing much today, if at all.

There are still disciples of John the Baptist, funnily enough, around, but not very many of them. Thank goodness for that. But anyway, we're watching a handover from John to Jesus. And just as we've seen before in the book of Acts, when the gospel faces a new kind of spiritual frontier, a new kind of spiritual barrier, there's a cluster of things that happen which are meant to remind us of the day of Pentecost and what happened to the original disciples.

And I presume that even the number 12 there in verse 7 is meant to reinforce that connection. So you remember when the gospel first went into Samaria back in chapter 8, when it crossed over that huge barrier between Jews and Samaritans.

Luke tells us, when the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent to them Peter and John who came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit. For he had not yet fallen on any of them, but they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

And they laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit. Then again, in Acts chapter 11, Peter recounts how the Holy Spirit came to the first Gentile converts, God-fearers though they were.

[18 : 49] As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell on them just as on us at the beginning. And I remembered the word of the Lord, how he said, John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.

Well, now again, we're seeing the same kind of thing, aren't we? As John's disciples hear about Jesus, it's not that they're a new ethnic group that the gospel has now reached.

It's not particularly about the location either. Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, to the ends of the earth. But they are a new kind of group in a spiritual sense. And this is sort of the very weird thing about them, isn't it?

That makes them unlike any other group we have today because they're not getting converted exactly. They're just moving from the old covenant to the new covenant as they receive the new revelation.

So far, they've been trusting and obeying God's revelation as it unfolded. They've followed John's preparation teachings. And now, as Paul has been preaching to them, they've finally had identified for them the one John was pointing to and the one who fulfills all that the prophets had spoken about.

[19 : 56] The Lord Jesus, the spirit baptizer, you can be baptized in the spirit now. And so Jesus pours out his spirit upon them and grants them an experience just like the first disciples at Pentecost to confirm their new faith.

And then verse 8, Paul entered the synagogue and for three months spoke boldly, reasoning and persuading them about the kingdom of God. But when some became stubborn and continued in unbelief, speaking evil of the way before the congregation, he withdrew from them and took the disciples with him, reasoning daily in the hall of Tyrannus.

This continued for two years so that all the residents of Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks. And God was doing extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul so that even handkerchiefs or aprons that had touched his skin were carried away to the sick and their diseases left them and the evil spirits came out of them.

Now this is an extraordinary paragraph, isn't it? Again, notice what Paul did. He spoke boldly. He reasoned. He persuaded. In fact, he lectured. And he lectured in a lecture theater.

Notice what Paul spoke about. He spoke about the kingdom of God. It's the same message all the way through the book of Acts. It's the same message Jesus proclaimed. And in verse 10, it is called the word of the Lord.

[21 : 16] In other words, it's the message about the Lord Jesus and it's also the message from the Lord Jesus brought to us by his ambassadors declaring that he is the king of the kingdom and he has begun to reign and he will reign forever.

And if only we will leave behind our old rulers, the world, the flesh and the devil, we can enjoy his reign of love and peace and righteousness ourselves. And it was that message that was spreading far and wide.

Luke says, all the residents of Asia heard the word of the Lord. So again, I've got a map for you. That is the people in Troas, people in Pergamum, Hierapolis, people in Colossae, people in Laodicea.

And you remember Jesus' letter to the seven churches in the book of Revelation. They're all there too. Thyatira, Smyrna, Sardis and so on. And they didn't hear, they didn't always hear the gospel directly from Paul.

We know about the Colossians for instance, that it was a bloke named Epaphras who first preached the gospel to them. But presumably it was because Epaphras was sitting in the hall of Tyrannus at some point going to the Bible talks and then he took it home and he spread it by word of mouth.

[22 : 26] So the gospel spread like wildfire across this region. And you know, just to return to our theme, of course, that is power, isn't it? That is the power of God changing lives.

It's a simple strategy really. Let the word do the work. Now up on my wall at home in my study, I have a little poster. I have a few little posters actually.

And one of them has a quote from Martin Luther on it and I want to read it for you. Now I don't have this whole quote up on my wall. I'm just going to give you some context. Luther said, Take myself as an example.

I opposed indulgences and all the papists but never with force. I simply taught, preached and wrote God's word.

Otherwise, I did nothing. And while I slept or drank Wittenberg beer with my friends Philip and Amsdorf, the word so greatly weakened the papacy that no prince or emperor ever inflicted such losses upon it, I did nothing.

[23 : 31] The word did everything. Had I desired to ferment trouble, I could have brought great bloodshed upon Germany. Indeed, I could have started such a game that even the emperor would not have been safe.

But what would it have been? Mere fool's play. I did nothing. I let the word do its work. What do you suppose is Satan's thought when one tries to do the thing by kicking up a row?

He sits back in hell and thinks, oh, what a fine game the poor fools are up to now. But when we spread the word alone and let it alone do the work, that distresses him.

For it is almighty and takes captive the hearts and when the hearts are captured, the work will fall of itself. Isn't that right? That's what we've seen in the book of Acts.

Besides Jesus himself, the word, his word is really the main character. Living and active, speeding ahead, breaking new ground, unstoppable in its triumphal march, even when the messengers of the word are frail and weak and definitely stoppable.

[24 : 39] The word itself just continues to fly forward and ring out. So we must be content to depend on the power of God's word rather than on force, as Luther says, kicking up a row or political back channels and machinations or trendy techniques or gimmicks or fancy strategies and systems.

I mean, we will have strategies, of course. We will have techniques. You can't help it. But they will be strategies built around and focused on the word, won't they? Strategies focused on getting the word out there, digging into the word, opening up the word with people.

Techniques for wielding the sword of the spirit skillfully. Because that's what we really believe in at the end of the day. Not the power of our strategies, all of their sophistication or something, but the power of God's word.

But notice Paul's powerful proclamation was also accompanied by extraordinary miracles. And it is funny, isn't it, that little word extraordinary. That seems kind of redundant, doesn't it? What does an ordinary miracle look like?

But these miracles are kind of weird. You know, not really like any others that you see in the New Testament or in the Bible. Apart from, perhaps I was thinking of Peter's shadow, if you remember that occasion.

[26 : 04] But see here, the key thing to realize, I think, is that these miracles, they almost seem magical. Paul's handkerchiefs and aprons are being carried away.

They're almost becoming relics or talismans, being carried away, things that have touched his skin, taken across the city to heal people and to cast out demons or evil spirits where they're at.

And this, of course, leads into the final section of the passage because in verse 13, a group of Jewish exorcists want to get in on the action. See, in the ancient world, particularly if people died in horrible ways, which actually is the same in our day, right?

If someone dies in a horrible way and people start to think, oh, that ghost still haunts this house because she was drowned or she was something. In the ancient world, if people died in horrible ways, like they were beheaded or crucified, they weren't laid to rest, they were thought to become ghosts and to continue to haunt the living.

Their spirits, as it were, were thought to inhabit places and even people. For instance, again, thinking about John the Baptist, you might remember that after John was beheaded and Jesus began to grow in popularity, Matthew tells us at that time, Herod the Tetrarch heard about the fame of Jesus and he said to his servants, this is John the Baptist.

[27 : 37] He has been raised from the dead. That is why these miraculous powers are at work in him. In other words, what Herod thought is that somehow because of John's untimely, gruesome death, now his spirit was not resting in the underworld but had come back and was now working through this man, Jesus, to haunt Herod again.

Of course, that's not what was happening but that's what Herod concluded. Now, in Ephesus in the first century, this was all just part of the culture. Listen to how Peter Bolt describes it in his book on the underworld.

Again, this is a fairly long quote, this one. Ancient magic operated by harnessing the power of these restless spirits. People in the modern world can't really understand the grip in which magic held people of the ancient world.

Pliny, an intellectual from the middle of the first century, reckoned that he couldn't find anybody who wasn't afraid of being under the spell of curse tablets. These were typically sheets of lead thrown into graves and wells, places close to the underworld spaces after being inscribed with curses directed at rivals in business, love, sport, or whatever.

The ghosts of the underworld were meant to fulfill the directions of the curse which usually entailed inflicting all kinds of harm upon the victim's body and upon his or her family members.

[29 : 01] But it was not only the external attacks from underworld beings that could evoke fear, it was also the contamination brought by their very presence. Ghosts came from the filthy, smelly, foul world of rotteness.

The rotteness of death was all over them. No wonder the gospel's preferred term for them is unclean spirit. The Greeks spoke of the miasma, the contamination of the underworld and with ghosts around, the fear of contamination was strong.

What if they invaded and befouled our space, our home, our city? So in ancient Rome and Athens there were annual festivals which sought to drive the ghosts out of the city. Ghosts were thought capable of invading bodies as well.

Now, I've got to give you long quotes when I don't know what I'm talking about. So I'm not an expert in this stuff at all. And a huge blind spot for me personally trying to think through all of this this week.

So I'll just quote Peter Bolt. But I think it's just a little bit of the background here helps us to understand what is happening in this passage. See, having seen the extraordinary power of Paul's ministry in Jesus' name, right, proclaiming the risen Lord Jesus, the one who was famously crucified, right, it sounds like these exorcists have also decided that they want to harness the power of Jesus' restless spirit.

[30 : 27] spirit. They don't quite get what Paul is talking about, do they? So they try to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus. But in the end they fail miserably and the man with the evil spirit leaped on them, mastered all of them and overpowered them so they fled out of that house naked and wounded.

I don't know how the seventh guy, anyway, I don't know why he didn't get the picture but anyway. Now we know from earlier that this is not a failure on Jesus' part to overcome the evil spirit.

I mean, even Paul's handkerchiefs can do this job that the sons of Sceva can't manage to do, right, casting out evil spirits in Jesus' name. But I think the lesson here that spreads around Ephesus is that Jesus is not some underworld figure to be manipulated.

An evil spirit, a ghost, you can direct or control. The name of Jesus cannot be wielded like a magic charm or an incantation or a talisman or something like that.

So they start to realize, you see, what Paul is preaching is far more powerful and significant than that. Who Paul is preaching is someone far more powerful and significant than that. Jesus is doing something much better than magic.

[31 : 43] Jesus is actually risen from the dead, meaning he'd conquered the underworld. Death could not hold him. He was not rotting or decaying. He was not restless. Remember what Jesus told his disciples when he appeared to them.

I am not a ghost. Does a ghost have flesh and bones as you can see that I have? Or again, remember, brothers and sisters, that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth.

I mean, I normally skip over that under the earth bit. I don't think I think about that very much. You know, because what does that mean for a bunch of scientific rationalists? But in ancient Ephesus, it was a huge deal that Jesus had conquered the underworld and the underworld would bow to him.

And so, of course, having demonstrated once and for all that Jesus has conquered the underworld and was not just another restless spirit, many of the believers in Ephesus gave up their magic practices and burned their books, millions of dollars worth of books.

In verse 20, the word of the Lord continued to increase and prevail mightily. There's the power, isn't it? Not the power of magic words, not the power of cursed tablets, the power of the gospel.

[33 : 04] This is the word that can drive out all other fears of the gospel. So as we finish, you see this passage is about power. Who has the power?

Who is powerful? Another way of putting that is, who should we be afraid of? Who should we revere? The right answer is there in verse 17. Because when all of these events became known to the residents of Ephesus, both Jews and Greeks, and fear fell upon them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was extolled, it was magnified, magnified, it was enlarged is the word, right?

Jesus became kind of front and center in their vision. He should be front and center in our vision, eclipsing everything and everyone else.

Like when you're standing near a huge waterfall. First and foremost, you take into account that, don't you? You act and you move, bearing that in mind. I can just imagine myself, you know, being a fool or something.

You see a cockroach or a mouse and you're so scared that you sort of forget where you are and you jump and you slip and you fall into the raging waters. What an idiot. And it's a bit like that though when we're afraid of man.

[34 : 23] When we fear powerful people, political movements, dictators, opinion polls. Actually, when we get Jesus in his proper place, he liberates us from the fear of man, from the fear of magic, even from the fear of death.

My friends, these things are cockroaches and mice compared to the mighty power of the Lord Jesus and the power of his word that swept across the world and is still sweeping across the world.

It will surely prevail. It cannot be stopped no matter who stands against it, no matter how proud our society is at the moment, no matter what obstacles it has to overcome, it will prevail.

So I want to finish with an old hymn which I love. I'm not, I'm sure some of you will know it but even if you don't know it and I don't think we can sing it afterwards together but I'll finish with this.

It's written by John Wesley. Jesus, the name high over all in hell or earth or sky. Angels and men before it fall and devils fear and fly.

[35 : 44] Jesus, the name to sinners dear, the name to sinners given, it scatters all their guilty fear. It turns their hell to heaven. Jesus, the prisoner's fetters, breaks and bruises Satan's head. Power into strengthless souls he speaks and life into the dead. Oh, that the world might taste and see the riches of his grace.

The arms of love that compass me would all mankind embrace. His only righteousness I show. His saving truth proclaim, tis all my business here below to cry, behold the Lamb.

Happy if with my latest breath I may but gasp his name, preach him to all and cry in death, behold, behold the Lamb.

Let's pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[36 : 53] Amen. Amen. Loving Father, we thank you that the Lord Jesus has all the power. We sinners twist and corrupted and misuse the power you give us but we know Jesus is faithful and true he's just and he's merciful and loving and kind and good and he'll look after his people, his sheep.

We pray that by your mighty power, by the power of the word of the Lord Jesus, the gospel, you would protect us, shepherd us home, keep transforming us, help us to be protected from the world and the flesh and the devil and those things that seek to destroy us or weaken our faith.

And we pray, Father, that your mighty word would continue to spread across this city, bringing salvation to the lost, bringing many people to honour the Lord Jesus, to have a right fear of him so that also they might enjoy him and delight in him, see his magnificence and his beauty and worship him with us forever and ever.

We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.