

Week Three: The God Who Works In and Through Us

January 16-20, 2023



THE GRANVILLE CHAPEL

Sharing Our Lives | Sharing The Gospel

“Expect Great Things, Attempt Great Things”

In the late 18th century, a spiritual lethargy had begun to settle over England. In response, a group of church leaders met in Northamptonshire to hear a message from a young pastor named William Carey – the author of a then-recently published tract titled, *“An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathen.”* Carey’s sermon that day would come from Isaiah 54:2-3, and in it he repeatedly used an epigram that would go on to become his greatest and most oft-quoted expression. It goes like this: “Expect great things from God, attempt great things for God.”

Within a year of the delivery of that sermon a new missionary society was formed, and William Carey himself left his pulpit in England to lead a work in India. Though he would later become known as the “father of modern missions,” it was Carey’s simple faith in a powerful God, and a powerful conviction in a simple call to share the gospel with others just as Jesus had commanded that gave him the courage necessary to ignite a flame of missionary zeal that burns brightly even to this day.

The lethargy in Carey’s day was due in part to a prevailing belief that the church could not press forward in mission until a very tangible movement of the Holy Spirit could be discerned. While it is true that the church must follow the Holy Spirit’s lead, the church must also recognize that because it has received the Holy Spirit, it is free to step out in active faith. This of course requires a delicate nuance, for action must be balanced in proportion to the church’s own wisdom, prayerfulness, and holiness. But the church must also embrace the reality that as it follows God’s will revealed in the Scriptures, it is no doubt moving in the direction the Holy Spirit wants it to go. For God cannot contradict Himself! This was Carey’s point in his day: “What are we waiting for, church?” he cried. “God has called us to be on mission for Him, let us go and watch what He does through us! Expect great things! Attempt great things!” (*My paraphrase.*)

We are not immune to this type of lethargy ourselves. We long for signs and wonders, to join in and be a part of some sensational movement. But if we stop for a moment and reorient ourselves to the call that God has put upon us, perhaps we will see ourselves as already enveloped in such a sensational movement – in the wonderful gospel work already going on in our church and in our community. Perhaps we need to join William Carey and “expect great things from God, while attempting great things for God.”

This is week three of our month of prayer – week three of joining our hearts and voices together to seek God’s wisdom and blessing on our plans for the future. We continue to turn to Ephesians 3:20-21 to guide us; this time to the phrase, “according to the power at work within us.” This week we pray to the God Who works in and through us.

Monday, January 16

"Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in Me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father." -John 14:12

Greater Works Than These

Today's passage comes from a section of John's Gospel known as "The Farewell Discourse," where Jesus is preparing His disciples for his imminent death and resurrection. Part of this preparation is teaching them of the blessing that will come once He is gone. As hard as this would be, it had always been God's eternal plan that His Son would suffer and die for His people, rise again in triumph over sin and death, ascend into heaven, and then - along with the Father - send the Holy Spirit. And look how Jesus describes the future coming of the Spirit in this verse: when the Spirit comes, they will do greater works than those Jesus had done. Now, Jesus isn't saying that they will do greater miracles - or that we would each be mini-miracle workers even today. No, Jesus is speaking about the redemptive power of the gospel that would accompany the New Covenant Church, and the impact the Church's ministry would have on advancing God's Kingdom to the farthest ends of the earth. So, as we begin to pray this week to the God Who works in and through us, let us give thanks for the great(er) works He has - and still is - accomplishing through the Church.

Prayer

"Dear God, thank You for the ministry of Jesus Christ for sinners like me. Thank You for fulfilling the promise to send Your Holy Spirit. And thank you for the great and wondrous works that the Church has done since Jesus' ascension into heaven. When I consider how that work continues to advance today, I am thankful for my church, The Granville Chapel, and I humbly ask you to help us carry on Your great work in this community to which we are called. In Jesus' Name. Amen."

Question for Reflection

What great work(s) from the Church's past are you most thankful for?

Tuesday, January 17

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be My witnesses..." -Acts 1:8

You Will Be My Witnesses

Just as Jesus was about to ascend into heaven, He once again reiterated His promise regarding the Holy Spirit to His disciples. Jesus wanted them to know that with the coming of the Spirit comes power, and with that power comes the call to be His witnesses. And His promise is fulfilled in the very next chapter (Acts 2)! The church is gathered in prayer, the Spirit suddenly falls upon them visibly and dramatically, the flame of the New Testament church is ignited, and the gospel begins to spread throughout all the world. And it hasn't stopped. Even this very day, the gospel is beginning to spread among people and places that have never heard it before. And this is because God continues to call His people to be His witnesses, giving them power to carry out His great commission to make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:18-20). And while you may not be called to go across the globe, you are still called to be His witness – whether that be across the room, across the street, or across the town.

Prayer

"Jesus, thank You for calling me to be one of Your witnesses. It is a privilege to tell others about the new life I have in You and invite them to follow You just as I have. I also know that there are those who have been specially called by You to be Your witnesses to all the corners of the earth. I pray that You would be with them to bring fruit to their ministries and that You would provide for all their needs. As my church plans for our future, I ask that you not only give us a permanent home in our community, but a home that can be a base for training and sending even more witnesses to share Your gospel wherever you desire for it to go. In Your Name. Amen."

Question for Reflection

In what way(s) are you called to be a witness for Jesus Christ?

Wednesday, January 18

"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." -Romans 8:11

Resurrection Power

In today's verse we find a vital connection between the resurrection of Jesus Christ and our own daily reality. In the context of all Romans 8, Paul is encouraging Christians in their ongoing struggle to walk according to the Spirit and not according to the flesh. He wants us to embrace the great hope for us in this battle - that we are and will eternally be victorious because we have resurrection power dwelling inside us. What exactly does this mean, though? It means that, because we have the Spirit, we will certainly endure in our salvation. It is just as J.C. Ryle once wrote regarding this truth: "Not one bone of Christ's body shall ever be broken; not one lamb of Christ's flock shall ever be plucked out of His hand" (from, *"The True Church"*). Such assurance as this not only gives us strength for today, but it most certainly gives us bright hope for tomorrow...and every tomorrow after that as well. So then, we can say with Paul later in chapter 8: "if God is for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31)

Prayer

"O LORD, I am overwhelmed at the reality of Your power that not only lives within me, but that also keeps me safe and secure for all eternity. I confess that I often live as though I am fighting a losing battle instead of living in the victory I have in Jesus. Help me to walk in this truth and to celebrate it in all that I do. I also pray for my fellow believers at The Granville Chapel - that they would also rest and delight in Your resurrection power. Grant to us hope and peace in Your great salvation. In Jesus' Name. Amen."

Question for Reflection

What helps you when you struggle with the assurance of your salvation?

Thursday, January 19

"There is one body and one Spirit - just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call." -Ephesians 4:4

One Body, One Spirit

In Ephesians 4, Paul teaches the Church about the unity it has as the Body of Christ. And at the heart of this unity is the Holy Spirit, who not only holds the body together, but Who also gives gifts to its members as Christ desires. This is a central teaching of the entire New Testament: that each member has been given a gift to use for the building up of the body, and every gift is vitally important to the ministry of the body as a whole (see Romans 12:1-8; 1 Corinthians 12:1-27). This means that you – yes you! – are an important part of the body of Christ at The Granville Chapel. You have been given a gift by the Holy Spirit and you are a gift to this church. You are a blessing to each and every other member, and your gifts are needed for us to thrive as we are called. As we look to the future, you will most certainly play an important role in whatever God has for us!

Prayer

"O God, I rejoice in the truth that I am Your workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for the good works that you have prepared for me to walk into. I desire to serve You by using the gifts you have given to me. Please tune my heart to the needs of my brothers and sisters at The Granville Chapel. Give me the grace and opportunity I need to serve others for Your glory and the good of our church. And, God, I also pray that you would encourage those who feel they have no gifts, and those who might not know how to use their gifts. Your Word says that You work in and through us – not some of us – but all of us. I believe Your Word and I cannot wait to see how You will bring this to pass. In Jesus' Name. Amen."

Question(s) for Reflection

What spiritual gift(s) has God given to you? How confident are you in using that gift(s) in the church?

Friday, January 20

*"Being strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy."
-Colossians 1:11*

Endurance and Patience with Joy

As we come to the end of week three, we might be tempted to think, "what does this week's theme have to do with our church's plans for the future, anyway?" Well, I'm glad that you asked (or that I made you ask)! You see, we know that God is able; and we know that God has no limits; and now we see that God works powerfully in and through us. But the reality we still face regarding our future is that we don't know how far into the future we will have to wait to see how God provides. But here's what we can know: God's power at work in us by His Holy Spirit will, as Colossians 1:11 says, strengthen us for all endurance and patience with joy. The same God who has brought us to this place is the same God who will give us the endurance and patience we need as we eagerly await all that He has for us. I want you to be comforted by this, brothers and sisters. God has certainly begun a wonderful work in us by His power, and I am absolutely certain that He will bring that work to full completion – in His time, according to His will, for our good, and for His glory. And to that I hope you will join me in offering a very hearty, "AMEN!"

Prayer

"Father, Your power at work in us is certainly enough to give us the endurance and patience we need for the days ahead. Though we face all forms of uncertainty, none of it is uncertain to You. You are in absolute control of absolutely everything, and that truth gives me great comfort. Please increase our joy in You as we watch You work, and as we await that work to come to its full completion. In Jesus' Name. Amen."

Question for Reflection

In what way(s) are you in need of "endurance and patience with joy" in your life?

A Closing Thought

One New Year's Day, in the Tournament of Roses parade, a beautiful float suddenly began to sputter and then came to a jolting halt. What was the problem? It had run out of gas. The entire parade was delayed until someone finally showed up with a can of gas. Everyone watched as the can was emptied, and the float eventually came to life once again. The ironic thing about the whole incident was that the float was in the parade to represent the Standard Oil Company. You see, even with all the vast resources at its disposal, Standard Oil's float still ran out of gas!

In Luke 24:49, Jesus promised the disciples that when the Holy Spirit came that they would be "clothed with power from on high." We've seen this week not only how that promise came true, but how it continues to be true in us even today. So, let's not neglect the vast resources of power that God, by His grace, has granted to us through His Holy Spirit. Instead, let us continue to move forward, patiently hopeful, and joyfully expectant for all that God will most certainly do for The Granville Chapel in the days - and years - that lie ahead of us!



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