

Monsoon- Part 2 When Power Strikes

I. Introduction

- A. We are continuing our series called monsoon. Monsoon is a season we experience when our desert heat causes winds to shift drawing moisture up from the gulfs of California and Mexico. The heat, wind and moisture create an environment where storms are common, sometimes sudden and destructive. And in this monsoon series, we are comparing components of a monsoon storm to the storms we experience in living life.
- B. Our first week, we talked about wind and fear, and we said faith destroys the power of fear and looked at several ways to battle fear in our storms.
- C. Last week we compared the heat and humidity of our monsoon season to discouragement. We talked about the causes of discouragement and its result, and we concluded with 4 ways we can help bring down discouragement in our storms.

II. Today's Component

- A. This morning, I'd like to look at another component of our monsoon season, and that component is lightning.
- B. Lightning is an electrical discharge produced by thunderstorms. For reasons still debated by scientists, the bottoms of storm clouds become negatively charged and go looking for a positive charge. When it finds a positive charge, a connection is completed and a bolt of lightning is created between the 2 points. Sometimes it finds the positive charge in the tops of other clouds; sometimes it finds the positive charge on the ground.

III. Today's Connection

- A. But in our everyday walk of life, there is something just as impactful as lightning. Lightning is a very powerful influence created during storms. If you saw my Facebook page this past week, you saw I asked for a great monsoon storm to serve as an illustration. We sort of got one on Monday night. Lightning was lighting up the sky. And lightning is a powerful force.
- B. Lightning heats up the air to 50,000° F and contains a hundred million electrical volts. That seems powerful to me.
- C. STORY: A couple of years ago, we were in Prescott for the 4th of July. Around 3 PM a monsoon storm blew in. The wind was incredible, thunder and lightning were getting closer, it started to rain really hard and our car was half a mile away. So, we fully intended to ride out the storm under our canopy. So we lowered our canopy half way down. If you remember from a couple of weeks ago, my son was sitting in the middle bundled up crying "Can we just go home now?" So, the canopy is half way down, the storm is great and Jeni and I are each hanging on to a side of the canopy. Because the canopy was down so low, we couldn't really see up, but we could see out. And all of a sudden there is a flash of light and a crack of thunder almost simultaneously and a shock went through my body like I have never felt before. Instinctively, I let go of the canopy bar I was holding and was like "woa!" I'm not sure what was actually hit by lightning- the ground maybe. But there were 4 of us in a row that felt this powerful surge of electricity.
- D. And our real life storms can pack a powerful punch too. This morning, I'd like us to look at lightning and make some comparisons between lightning and the power of God.

IV. ►Lightning and God's Power

Lightning and God's power are not similar in every way, but there are comparisons we can make. And so, for the next few minutes, I'd like us to consider some similarities.

- A. ►Process. Both lightning and God's power have a process.
 - 1. Typically, the bottom of a cloud becomes negatively charged and it sends an invisible "leader" looking for a positive charge in either other clouds or on the ground. As the "leader" approaches a positive charge, an invisible "streamer" emerges. When the 2 meet, a connection is sealed generating a bolt of lightning. That bolt of lightning is the visible expression of the power generated.
 - 2. And God's power has a process too. If lightning is the expression of power in a storm, then what is God's expression of His power? I think it's His Spirit. Today, in the church, God normally demonstrates his power through His Spirit. Over and over again in the New Testament, the writers talk about God's power being demonstrated through the Holy Spirit.
 - 3. ►^{NLT} **Romans 15:13b** Then you will overflow with confident hope through the power of the Holy Spirit.

4. And it's the same way Jesus operated when He was on earth. ► ^{NLT} **Acts 10:38** And you know that God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. Then Jesus went around doing good. . . for God was with him.
5. God's power comes through His Spirit. And I think this point is important. Reading through the Bible can get very discouraging when you think about all the miracles God performed. Blind people seeing, deaf people hearing, etc. I remember watching religious TV when I was kid and calling their prayer line for my dad, who is blind, because they told me that if I believed enough, God was powerful enough. Let's face it; we don't seem to experience that kind of power much. Does that mean God's power is limited? Has God somehow removed himself from our lives or our storms?
6. I don't think so. But I do believe God's power might look differently than we want or were maybe taught. In the Old Testament and in part of the New Testament, God's power was demonstrated through his outward acts. Dead people raised, blind people seeing, lepers healed, armies destroyed without fighting; I think there was even a donkey that talked once. And that's the power we sometimes want to see. But when we start to look at the church after Jesus left the earth, we find His power demonstrated differently. That's not to say God couldn't or doesn't perform miracles. And it's not to say we shouldn't ask for them. But there is a realization that it's just not the normal way He works.
7. Look at ► ^{NLT} **Ephesians 3:16** I pray that from his glorious, unlimited resources he will empower you with inner strength through his Spirit.
8. God is just as powerful as we see him in the Bible, but now His power is demonstrated through the personal investment of his spirit in people instead of outward acts. Generally, people are drawn to God by the Holy Spirit. Most of time, the lightning bolts we are going to see will come dressed as the spirit of God moving in people like you and me.
9. So God's process for demonstrating his power is through His spirit, not in flashy acts of grandeur. But if that's all we look for, we will miss the majority of God's power. As I thought about this, I wondered how many times I missed seeing the power of God because I was looking for the wrong thing in the wrong place. Look for God's power in people.

B. Partnership

1. ► There is another similarity between lightning and the power of God. Both require a partnership.
2. Earlier I mentioned the partnership between negative charges in the clouds and positive charges in other clouds or on the earth. Lightning requires a partnership, a completed circuit, to discharge. There is no power and there is no lightning without that partnership, without that connection.
3. And I think God's power works as a partnership as well. The truth is, God doesn't need a partnership; it is not required. But God designed it to be a partnership. And His partner is you (and me.)
4. In the Bible book of Romans, Paul says ► ^{NLT} **Romans 8:11** The Spirit of God, who raised Jesus from the dead, lives in you. . .
5. God's process for his power might be his spirit, but the partnership is with us- those who believe in Jesus for eternal life. And in that partnership with God's spirit, we see and experience God's power.
6. ► ^{NLT} **Acts 1:8** But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses. . . It's a partnership.
7. ► ^{NLT} **Ephesians 3:7** By God's grace and mighty power, I have been given the privilege of serving him by spreading this Good News. It's a partnership.
8. ► ^{NLT} **2 Timothy 1:7** For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline. God has partnered with us- not to be fearful and timid, but he's given us the power to love and live right. It's a partnership.
9. And this partnership is optional. ► ^{NLT} **2 Timothy 3:5** They will act religious, but they will reject the power that could make them godly. Stay away from people like that!
10. The truth is, God wants to partner with us- to use us, to empower us- and He gave us his spirit to do it. But we can ignore God and his spirit.
11. Whether we are in a storm or not, are we partnering with God to be a tool of his power? "But how?" is the question that comes to my mind. In Romans, Paul tells us how to partner with God and His spirit.

12. ►^{NLT} **Romans 8:5** Those who are dominated by the sinful nature think about sinful things, but those who are controlled by the Holy Spirit think about things that please the Spirit.
13. It's really that simply. Focusing on God and his spirit in this moment. Sometimes God's spirit provides the defensive power to stand against temptation and sin. Sometimes God's spirit provides the offensive power to speak up or be quiet or love, show compassion, encourage someone. The question is, "God, what should I do in this moment?" In this business plan, with this customer, with these kids, with this spouse, with this friend, regarding these bills, about this job offer, about this success, about this failure. Do we focus on God's spirit- in this moment? It's a partnership!

C. Product

1. A third similarity between lightning and God's power is they both have a ►product. Each produces a result.
2. Lightning produces thunder. When lightning flashes it instantly heats the air around itself to approx 50,000° F forcing the air around it to expand rapidly creating a shock wave that becomes a sound wave that you and I hear as thunder. Thunder and lightning always go together; lightning is always first and thunder always follows. And thunder can be a powerful thing as well.
3. STORY: On vacation a few years ago, we were staying in a house nestled between in a small valley. An afternoon storm came along and it seemed like the storm was down inside the valley making its way between the mountains. It was pretty cool. But the thunder was intense. One crack of thunder produced so much power, the house shook. The windows vibrated and everything on the window sills fell off. It was quite a jolt.
4. So what then is the product of God's power? As I looked at every instance of God's power in the New Testament church, I found one primary product; one result that God seems to be using his power to accomplish. And that product is changed hearts. Listen to some of these verses.
5. ►^{NLT} **Romans 1:16** For I am not ashamed of this Good News about Christ. It is the power of God at work, saving everyone who believes -- the Jew first and also the Gentile.
6. ►^{NLT} **1 Corinthians 1:18** The message of the cross is foolish to those who are headed for destruction! But we who are being saved know it is the very power of God.
7. You see, God uses his power- through us by the spirit he gave us- to produce new people who believe in Jesus for eternal life. This year we've been working on seeking 7. We know can't change a person's heart, but God sure can; and he uses us to do it. (back to that partnership again.) But God also uses his power to change the hearts of those of us who already believe.
8. ►^{NLT} **Romans 15:13** I pray that God, the source of hope, will fill you completely with joy and peace because you trust in him. Then you will overflow with confident hope through the power of the Holy Spirit.
9. God uses his power to provide joy, peace, trust and hope for those who already believe. That's where his power is- changing hearts!
10. ►^{NLT} **Hebrews 13:21** may he equip you with all you need for doing his will. May he produce in you, through the power of Jesus Christ, every good thing that is pleasing to him. . .
11. God is using His power to equip us to do what pleases Him. He's changing hearts.
12. Have you ever just sat and watched a lightning storm? This past week, we had a little lightning storm. I opened the blinds in my bedroom and laid at the foot of the bed and just watched. It's fascinating.
13. ►^{NLT} **1 Peter 1:12** . . . And now this Good News has been announced to you by those who preached in the power of the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. It is all so wonderful that even the angels are eagerly watching these things happen.
14. The angels have opened the blinds of heaven and are laying at the foot of the bed watching; they are watching me- and you. They want to see the amazing things that happen when people partner with God and let His power work. How awesome it is to see God's power change a person- how awesome it is to see God change me- so awesome in fact that the angels are eagerly watching to see God's power work in people's hearts.

D. Prominence

1. So, we see God's process, his partnership, his product. ►Last, I'd like to look at the prominence of God's power.
2. When is it we see lightning most prominent? It's when it's dark outside. It's either at night or in the midst of dark clouds. How amazing to see lightning light up the night sky. Sometimes you can almost see where it begins and where

it ends. It is beautiful and exciting. It's unpredictable. A lightning bolt is not wider than a pencil, but its effects on the night sky are breathtaking.

3. And so I think is the power of God. When is it most prominent? In the midst of our storms. When our sky seems dark or gray. When there seems to be no light at the end. When the clouds seem to overtake anything that could provide light. I think that's when God's power is most evident. Weather it's in our own life or someone else's; we can see God's power best when things are dark.
4. And the apostle Paul recognized this too. Paul had some ailment; probably some physical condition, that he wanted God to remove. And Paul thought he could be more effective for God without this condition. And he asked God to heal him. ►^{NLT} **2 Corinthians 12:9** Each time he said, "My grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness." So now I am glad to boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ can work through me.
5. Clearly Paul would have used God's power differently. But he recognized the prominence of God's power in the storms. Paul was most effective, he could see God work most clearly in the darkest parts of his life.
6. In his letter to the church at Corinth, the Apostle Paul describes the power from a different angle. He says, ►^{NLT} **2 Corinthians 4:7** We now have this light shining in our hearts, but we ourselves are like fragile clay jars containing this great treasure. This makes it clear that our great power is from God, not from ourselves.
7. Paul's point is that God's power is more evident when it is used through fragile people. When we find ourselves in storms, that's the time we see God's power most prominent. I know we'd rather see his power without the storm, but that doesn't seem to be the way the world works. Sure, sometimes, on occasion, but not normally.

V. So what? ►

1. So, God's power has some similarities to lightning: there's a process, a partnership, a product and a prominence. As we close this morning, I'd don't have a tidy little action step. We covered a lot of ground. But in the end, I think I'd like us to try one thing this week. I'd like us to step into the power of God by asking God 1 question as often as we think of it: Lord, how can we partner in this moment? And see if we don't experience God's life changing power.

PRAY