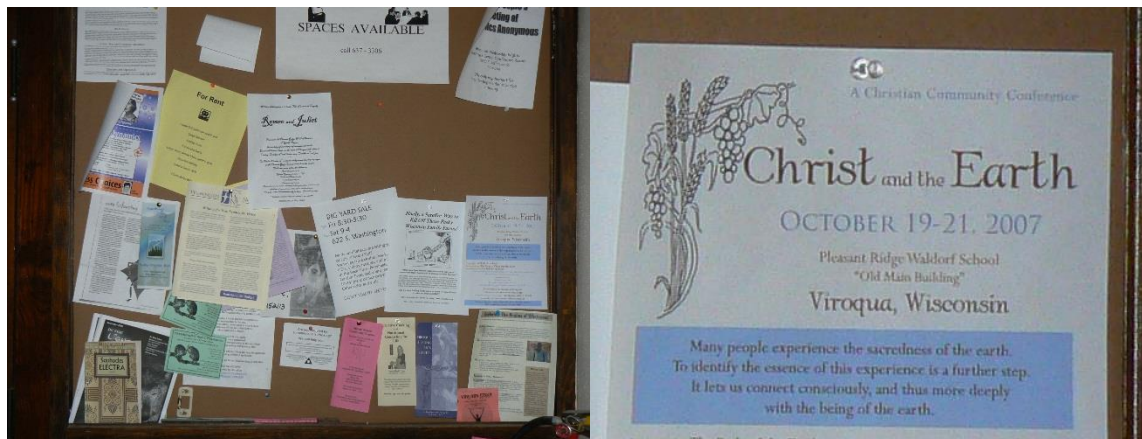




## Part 2

Everyone knows that Viroqua has a strong New Age presence. We held worship service at the Landmark Center for five years and I had my office there for eight years. If you are not familiar with the Landmark, along with the Coop, it could be called the epi-center of New Age thinking in Viroqua. When we had our capital campaign banquet to gather funds for this building, we poked a little fun at the Landmark. We were grateful for the space but it was not the ideal place to hold a worship service. Boy, could I tell you some stories! So we created this slideshow called “The Top Ten Reasons We Love the Landmark.” On the first slide we showed an actual photo of the bulletin board as you walked into the auditorium and the caption read, You can earn a



Master’s Degree in “New Age Philosophy”... (second slide) just by reading the bulletin boards. And it as almost true.

When we run into New Age beliefs we can mostly ignore them because no one is forcing us to follow them. But whether they trouble us or not, we must realize that there is a power behind their beliefs. We may not see evidence of this power but many who walk in those realms do see and experience it. And it’s not the power that we worship.

The city of Ephesus in Paul's day was far worse than Viroqua. Almost every citizen in the city was a pagan. Ephesus was home to the Temple of Artemis, the Greek goddess. Speaking of power, there was a true power encounter in Ephesus that is recorded for us in Acts 19.

<sup>11</sup> God did extraordinary miracles through Paul, <sup>12</sup> so that even handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched him were taken to the sick, and their illnesses were cured and the evil spirits left them.

<sup>13</sup> Some Jews who went around driving out evil spirits tried to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus over those who were demon-possessed. They would say, "In the name of Jesus, whom Paul preaches, I command you to come out." <sup>14</sup> Seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, were doing this. <sup>15</sup> One day the evil spirit answered them, "Jesus I know, and I know about Paul, but who are you?" <sup>16</sup> Then the man who had the evil spirit jumped on them and overpowered them all. He gave them such a beating that they ran out of the house naked and bleeding.

<sup>17</sup> When this became known to the Jews and Greeks living in Ephesus, they were all seized with fear, and the name of the Lord Jesus was held in high honor. <sup>18</sup> Many of those who believed now came and openly confessed their evil deeds. <sup>19</sup> A number who had practiced sorcery brought their scrolls together and burned them publicly. When they calculated the value of the scrolls, the total came to fifty thousand drachmas. <sup>20</sup> In this way the word of the Lord spread widely and grew in power (Acts 19:11-20).

There was power in the demon-possessed man but there was a greater power who was with Paul. The one who was in Paul was greater than the one who was in the world.

Every believer in Ephesus would have know about this power encounter, so when Paul wrote about the power that was available to them, they had already seen it in action. They knew that Paul could heal the sick and cast out demons. They knew that demonic powers existed and will destroy you any chance they get. Remember, this was still a young church when Paul wrote his letter to them so this story would have been well known to them. As I read this passage again, look for the source and impact of this power.

*15 For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, 16 I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, 17 that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, 18 having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, 19 and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might 20 that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, 21 far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. 22 And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, 23 which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.*

Last Sunday we look at "the hope to which he has called you" and the glorious riches of his inheritance in the saints. We learned that Jesus is our inheritance and the church is the Father's inheritance. What incredible truths these are! This morning we focus on

**3. What is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe.**

I want to do something very simple here and just breakdown verse 19. Before we know what this power is, I want us to see who it is for. It is the immeasurable greatness of his power *toward us who believe*. Whatever power is available, it is intended for us. It is “toward us who believe.” So simply by being a believer, by virtue of being in the Kingdom of God, this power is for us. It is intended for us, for our benefit. It is available for us anywhere, anytime.

*the immeasurable greatness of his power*—Now we know that this power is immeasurably great power. This makes logical sense, doesn’t it? God is infinite. God is immeasurable, therefore his power would also be immeasurable.

I’m reading a fascinating book about the history of the electric light and electricity in general. I’m a little over half way through the book and right now Thomas Edison, Nikola tesla and George Westinghouse are battling for supremacy of the future of electricity. Of course we know that Edison invented the lightbulb. That’s about all I knew from that section of history. I never knew about the great battle that raged at the end of the 1800’s. Thomas Edison was a diehard proponent of DC current while Westinghouse fought for AC because it would travel much further than DC and would be necessary for taking electricity any distance at all. Obviously, AC won the day simply out of necessity. As a result, Edison has his entire company stolen out from underneath him. Edison was the largest shareholder of Edison General Electric. Mostly because he was stubborn about direct current, the shareholders took the company from him even before he knew it was happening. They simply dropped his name and it became General Electric? Ever heard of it? ;-)

Another amazing thing about this story is that Edison was pumping electricity into homes before he had a reliable way to measure the amount of current. So guess what he did at first? Electricity was free! So they had all this power, they couldn’t see it but no way to tell how much there was. Sounds a bit like the immeasurable power of his greatness toward us who believe. We can’t see it and we can’t measure it. But unlike electricity, we can’t measure it because it is immeasurable. This is the power that is available to all believers.

*The immeasurable greatness of his power*—This is his power. This is where we see the New Age teaching. They are all about unleashing the power within you. “Everyone has it. You are filled with supernatural power but you’ve held it back. It’s corked up inside of you and I can teach you how to release it, to do whatever you want in this world and you can tap into other worlds also.” New Agers love to talk like this. It’s not our power, it’s his power.

That may seem a bit redundant to you, but even for believers I don’t think we should take this point for granted. Even some so-called Christian books blur the proper lines here.

Harness the divine power within you, step into the dimension of your dreams. You can change your circumstances and make all your dreams come true by declaring God’s promises over them by faith. Right believing sets you in motion for supernatural miracles.<sup>1</sup>

This is an explicitly Christian book yet the author refers to the power as “divine power.” Do you see any problems with that? It’s divine. It’s from God, right, so what’s the big deal? Calling it divine is merely a description. If I call my van a Toyota van, you know what I mean. It was

manufactured by Toyota. But who owns it? It's my van. It's a Toyota van but I possess it. To speak of divine power within you only identifies what it is like. It is god-like power but now I possess this power. It doesn't matter where it came from because now it's mine. Unlike this false teaching, we agree with Paul who called it the immeasurable greatness of his power. This is not just divine power, it is God's power that he makes available to us. We must never forget that it is his to give and also his not to give.

*according to*—now how do I make a separate sermon point about the phrase, “according to”? It's really not a separate point but it is an important phrase. *what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to...* According to what? *According to the working of his great might that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places...* Now don't think of according to like in this way. According to the weather man on channel 8, it's going to snow tomorrow. Ignore the fact that weatherman can be wrong. That's not my point. But in this example, according to simply means that he is the one who said it. It was John the weather guy, not Mary. According to Mary, it is not going to snow but according to John it is.

But a better translation than *according to* would be what the NASB has, which is “in accordance with.” You could say, “The soldiers said they acted in accordance with his orders.” In other words, they did exactly what their commanding officer told them to do. They did not waver. His orders became their actions. Back to Ephesians 1, let me change the verse using this phrase.

*what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, **in accordance with** the working of his great might 20 that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places.* This means that the immeasurable power toward us is the same power that God used to raise Jesus from the dead. This power is the same as that power. The power made available to us flows out of and is in accordance with that power. There is no difference between the two. The immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe is resurrection power.

Was the resurrection God's greatest demonstration of power? If I were to compare the resurrection of one man next to the creation of our vast universe—if I were to compare these side by side, I would tend to lean toward creation as the larger display of power. Do you see what I mean? Of course, resurrection demonstrates the power of life and death, but the power to create out of nothing is beyond our scope of imagination. By the way, this is the kind of power than New Agers and some Christians believe that we have. They believe we have the power to create our own reality simply by speaking it into existence. But enough of that topic.

In some ways I think the creation of the universe shows greater power than the resurrection of one man. Ultimately, there really isn't a reason for a comparison, I'm just drawing out some thoughts here. But when you think about it, of course it's not merely the resurrection of one man. It was the resurrection of the God man, Jesus Christ. This was the decisive act in human history. Ephesians 1:4 says that believers were chosen in him from before the foundation of the world. Can we be saved unless Christ was risen from the dead? No, so this means that the certainty of Jesus' resurrection happened prior to the creation of the universe.

Moreover, Jesus' resurrection shows the power over life and death, not just for one man, but for all who believe. This was not just a victory over life and death. This was the absolute victory over life and death.

More than that, it is ascension power. The power that is made available for us is also in accordance with the power that God worked which *seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places far above all rule and authority and power and dominion*. Now here's where we have a real power encounter. Remember the power encounter we read about in Acts 19? Paul had power from God to heal and cast out evil spirits and the demon possessed man also had power from Satan to do things. But this is the ultimate power encounter. After his resurrection. The Father exalted Jesus to his right hand—where he had been prior to his incarnation. And in so doing, he was placed above all rule and authority and power and dominion.

What are these powers? Sometimes it's difficult to tell if they are purely evil powers or a mixture of both evil and good. But several passages help us understand what they are.

Colossians 2:15—He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.

Eph 6.12—For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

1 Peter 3:22—who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him.

It's possible that the reference to “angels” in 1 Peter is to angels who did not follow Lucifer but the rest of these powers are obviously demonic in origin. Through his resurrection and ascension, Christ had a decisive victory over them all. He triumphed over them. They were subjected to him. All powers are inferior to Christ but also submissive to Him.

And Paul did not leave any wiggle room for any kind of power that he did not name specifically. Jesus was raised above all rule, authority, power and dominion *and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come*. Whatever the powers represented in the first phrase, Paul left no room for any power whatsoever in the second phrase. Jesus is above every name, every power. And he took the final decisive step by saying, “Not only in this age, but also in the one to come.”

This is clear as you can get. There is no room for disagreement. The power that raised Christ from the dead and seated him over all powers, is the same power that is available to us. The power that subjected every other power in the universe and every age is the same power that is available to us. Let me offer some applications.

1. It should help us pray.

Let's not forget Paul's prayer. *17 that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, 18 having the eyes of*

*your hearts enlightened, that you may know.* To have God's infinite power at our disposal is a heavy thought. It doesn't make us infinitely powerful but it does make this power available to us. That's why prayer is so necessary to fully grasp this amazing truth.

2. It guarantees our future resurrection.

And God raised the Lord and will also raise us up by his power (1 Corinthians 6:14). Jesus' resurrection is the ground and hope of our resurrection.

3. It guarantees our future ascension

Ephesians 2:6 says that "Christ...raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus." In a spiritual sense, we are already seated with Christ and one day our glorified bodies will be there as well. Notice, however, that we are not seated at the Father's right hand. That is reserved for Christ alone.

4. It should make us humble and dependent.

Since this is not our power to wield, then we need to be asking for it. We need to be abiding in Christ in order to take advantage of this power.

5. We have power available to us now.

This power is not only in regard to our future but for our daily lives. Power for what? To heal the sick and to cast out demons like Paul did? Some believers would say that and I would not completely rule that out. But that is not the heart of what God asks of us.

On Friday morning I got this message on Skype from a friend in Michigan. He wrote, "How often you deal with over the years a member of your church who is an addict and falls off the wagon?" He told me that at 3:00 am that the morning, he got a text from a friend which read, "Sorry, I love everyone at church but just let me die." Steve went and picked him up, may have saved his life and now this guy was sleeping off his drunkenness in his basement. We all face hard stuff in life, but whatever immeasurable power we have from the Lord has to work for guys like the one in Steve's basement. And we know it does, but it isn't easy.

So what then does this immeasurable power do for us? What difference does it make? Well you're not summoning some impersonal life force that you wield like a magician or superhero. This is His power. He will let us make use of it but only for the right reasons. Here's my simple application. Obedience. How many of you failed to always obey the Lord this past week? How many of you created problems for yourself because you did not obey the Lord in all things? We are usually our own worst enemy.

What if you could take two or three ways you disobeyed even this last week and thought about applying the immeasurable greatness of his power to that situation? What would you have done differently? How would you have thought differently? How would your attitude have changed had this been a present reality for you?

**Rich Maurer**  
**March 19, 2017**

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<sup>1</sup> Odette Dika Akwa, How to Unleash the Supernatural Power within You, iUniverse, 2015.