

Where Has All the Power Gone?

By Mike Cocoris

Speaker 1:

--Say to the students, or whoever is there hearing, that this is a man of God who is kind of a combined evangelist, pastor, teacher who has a heart for evangelism and more than that, for seeing people come to know Christ and then grow in Him. He said, also, be sure to mention that you have a man here who uh, took on the challenge of a downtown church and has brought a tremendous amount of life. This person also said be sure to mention that he comes across as a man of God because he is. We really are delighted to have uh Mike Cocoris here. We're hoping that wife Judy will join him later in the week sometime. He tells me that he has a husky voice, but we like husky voiced preachers. So brother Mike, come and open the word to us. Let's greet him, shall we?

[Audience applauds]

Mike Cocoris:

The day was made for traveling. The sun was high and bright. The traffic was thin. Frankly, the scenery was beautiful. At the time, I was an evangelist. I was in my car and I was travelling to a church where I was to speak for a week. Being alone in the car with nothing but the Lord and a tape recorder, I was enjoying the traveling. Well, all of a sudden I looked down at the dashboard and to my dismay, I noticed that a small red light had come on. Now, for the sake of you ladies, I need to say that um, there are two red lights that could come on on the dashboard of a car. One of them means, translated, stop immediately and don't move another inch. That's the oil light. The other means, you are in trouble, but if push comes to shove you can move a little more ways

down the road. Well, in this particular instance, it was the latter of the two, so I managed to make it to a filling station into a small town.

As I pulled in, I said to the attendant, "I've got a problem under the hood." He lifted it and very quickly discovered that I had simply lost a fan belt. He replaced it, I crawled back in my car and continued the trip. As I started moving down the road again, I got to thinking about what had just happened. And the more I thought about it, the more I thought, "You know, that's sort of a parable." Here I was, uh moving down the road at a pretty good clip. And uh, the truth of the matter was, I didn't have a whole lot of power. You see, when you lose a fan belt on a car, you cease to generate electricity. You're only living off of the energy you've stored up in the battery. And I got to thinking about that. And I thought, you know what, I would imagine if somebody had been sitting on the side of the road and watched me whiz by, they never would have known that I didn't have any power. I mean, they saw motion, and they wouldn't have known that I didn't have any power.

And I got to thinking about it, and I thought, you know, I wonder how long I was in the car moving down the road without any power and not knowing it myself. Seems to me that's a parable. It's a picture of some Christians I've known in some churches I've been in. You see there's motion, but no power. So I'd like to ask a very simple question tonight. What happened to all the power? I mean, where is the power to live a consistent Christian life? Where is the power to pray and get an answer? Where is the power to speak a word of witness for Jesus Christ and see the lives changed and transformed? Where, I ask, oh where has all the power gone? That's what I'd like for us to think about a bit tonight. Maybe we should start by asking, well, what is

the source of the believers' power to begin with, and to ask that question to a knowledgeable group like this is to answer it. Because we all know, don't we? "You shall receive power after that the whole-the Holy Spirit has come upon you. And then you should be witnesses unto Me in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the uttermost parts of the Earth." We are all aware that the source of our power is none other than the person of the Holy Spirit. But now that presents a problem. If something has gone wrong with our power--

[Audio doubles over itself]

Mike Cocoris:

--Then that means something has gone wrong with the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Now what could stop Him? What could hinder Him from producing full thrust and total dynamic in our lives? I would suggest that if you can put your finger on that, you might just be able to put your finger on what has happened to your spiritual power in your spiritual life. The answer, it seems to me, is in Ephesians chapter 4. Will you turn with me to Ephesians chapter 4. Now I'm going to begin reading with verse 30. The apostle Paul says, "And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby you are sealed until the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you with all malice. And be ye kind, one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." Notice in verse thirty he says that the Holy Spirit has sealed us till the day of redemption. Now there's a sense in which I have been redeemed, and it is past tense completed action.

And yet there is another sense in which my redemption is closer than when I believed. There's a sense in which the redemption is not complete, for when Jesus Christ comes back and we are

raised, to meet Him in the air, our bodies will be redeemed. So he is saying, in this passage, the Holy Spirit is coming to redeem us, our bodies. Then, He says, in the meantime, do not grieve Him. Don't grieve Him until the day when Jesus Christ comes back to receive us unto Himself. Now my question is, what does it take to grieve the Holy Spirit? Well look at the passage. Verse 25, "Wherefore putting away all lying, speak every man truth to his neighbor." Verse 26, "Be angry and sin not, let not the sun go down on your wrath." Verse 28, "Let him that stole steal no more." Verse 29, "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth. Verse 31, "And let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you with all malice." But context of this verse is obviously sin. So I would like to suggest that Paul is telling us here in this passage, that sin grieves the Holy Spirit.

And I would like to suggest beyond that, that since He is the source of our power, it is sin that has caused us to lose all of our spiritual dynamic. But now the fascinating thing, at least to me, is that as I look at this passage, and as I look at the sins that are mentioned, they are not biggies, I mean in none of the top ten in here, really, I mean there's no murder here, or adultery even. It's little ones! I mean, look how small some of these are. Some of these sins are so small, we aren't even sensitive to the fact that they're sins! For example, look at verse uh, 31, "Let all bitterness." Now folks, that is a little bitty sin. All of us experience a little bit of resentment all the time. I mean, that is really an itty bitty, teensy tiny sin! Um, maybe I can best communicate this by illustrating it. Um, when I was in uh, seminary, um I pastored a church about 100 miles north of Dallas, Texas. Um, every Saturday, my wife and I would uh go up to the church, and uh we would come back on Monday. And we also purchased groceries on Saturday. So on this

particular Saturday, I gave my wife the checkbook, we have a joint checking account at our house. that means, I put the money in and she takes it out.

[Audience laughs]

Mike Cocoris:

And um, she went off to the grocery store, and-and she bought groceries, and she came back.

And-and some folks up at the church had invited us to dinner, and we were uh, a little late

frankly, and so we were in kind of a hurry to unload the car with the groceries, and load it with

the luggage and the kids, and so I, in the midst of all this hustle and bustle, I said to her, "Have

you got the checkbook?" "She said, "Yes it's in my purse." We jumped in the car, we sped off, I

pulled around the car and pulled up to a filling station. I said, to the attendant, "Fill it up." And I

turned to my wife and I said, "Checkbook, please." And she opened this trunk that was sitting in her lap.

[Audience laughs]

Mike Cocoris:

And she commenced to look for the checkbook. And then all of a sudden, she got this real

sheepish grin on her face.

[Audience laughs]

Mike Cocoris:

And she said, "I left it at home." And I said, "What?!"

[Audience laughs]

Mike Cocoris:

"Don't you know we're already late and if I've got to go back home again, our checkbook is going to make us even later, and those folks are going to have dinner on the table.

[Unintelligible] and I thought you told me you had the checkbook in your purse, what do you mean it's back at the apartment?"

[Audience laughs]

Mike Cocoris:

Now if you had been sitting in the backseat, and you had tapped me on the shoulder and you'd had said, "Mike, do you love your wife?" I would have said, "Yeah!!!" Now I'm going to tell you, that thing called bitterness is just small, I mean it can come up over a left checkbook. You know? You can get bitter at your roommate.

[Audience laughs]

Mike Cocoris:

You can get bitter at your teacher. You can get bitter at the one you love the most. And that looks really rather fascinating when in Colossians chapter 3, Paul says, "Husbands, love your wives and be not bitter against them." The person you love the most is probably the person that irritates you most often. But you see the tragedy is, is that small, seemingly by comparison, small sin, grieves the Spirit of God. The Bible uses a dove as a symbol of the Holy Spirit, and a dove, or a pigeon, is a flighty animal. You don't have to throw some huge boulder at a pigeon to make him fly away. A small pebble will do. It doesn't take a huge sin to grieve the Holy Spirit. A small one will do. While we're looking at verse 30, let's look at the rest of it. Um, verse 31, "And let all

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bitterness," and then it says, "And wrath, and anger." Now let's look at those two words together. We-we use wrath and anger interchangeably in English. But um, in Greek, there is a vast difference between these two words. Wrath is an explosion of anger. With an emphasis on the explosion. Anger itself technically is an inner settled feeling of hatred.

[Audience laughs]

Mike Cocoris:

Now let's talk about wrath first. Did you ever explode? Some of you look guilty already!

[Audience laughs]

Mike Cocoris:

Let me illustrate again, and to play safe, I'm going to use an old illustration.

[Mike Cocoris laughs]

Mike Cocoris:

I've mentioned a moment ago that I was in seminary in Dallas. Up-the first year, we lived on one side of the downtown business district and the seminary was on the other. And every morning we got up, and I used to get up early in the morning, uh, before I went to school, and uh, spend some time with the Lord and the word. And I had a great time of fellowship with the Lord. And then my wife and I would get in the car, and I'd go right through downtown Dallas, I dropped her off, and then I'd go on over to the seminary, and uh, in the afternoon I'd go back and pick her up. Well, everything would go real well, every morning, until I got to one spot. There was one spot, right near the downtown business district where three freeways fed into one underpass. By the

way, it was right there were President uh Kennedy was shot. Right there. Well, everything would go real well. I'd get up in the morning, I'd spend time with the Lord, I'd sense that He was there, we had a great time in the word, and I'd jump in the car, and I'd get to that intersection. And somebody who looked like he got his driver's license from [unintelligible] would pull out in front of me!

[Audience laughs]

Mike Cocoris:

And I'd say, "Why don't you watch where you're going?!" And my wife would say, "calm down sweetheart, it's going to be alright."

[Audience laughs]

Mike Cocoris:

I'd drop her off, go on over to school. Talk to the Lord. And I know He was there, He was there this morning.

[Audience laughs]

Mike Cocoris:

And all of a sudden, I'd, I'd feel like He had left me. And I never did understand that, until one day He said, "Come here, son. I want to show you something. Let all bitterness and wrath be put away from you. That wrath grieves the Spirit of God." Now, some of you are sitting there saying, "That's right, preach it."

[Audience laughs]

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Mike Cocoris:

"All those hotheads need to cool off."

[Audience laughs]

Mike Cocoris:

"But I don't do that. I mean, I just, I know there's some immature people, but I don't do that. I know how to control my temper." You know what? I believe you. I believe there are people sitting in this room tonight who probably have never blown up, or at least rarely, very rarely. That's why this next word is in here. Mhmm.

[Audience laughs]

Mike Cocoris:

You see, there are two kinds of people in the world. Those who blow up, and those who clam up.

[Audience laughs]

Mike Cocoris: And I'll give you a little bit of prophecy. They marry each other.

[Audience laughs]

Mike Cocoris:

Ron Hafer is shaking his head yes!

[Mike Cocoris and audience laugh]

Mike Cocoris:

Which one are you?

[Mike Cocoris and audience laugh]

Mike Cocoris:

Don't answer that.

[Audience laughs]

Mike Cocoris:

The word anger means an inner settled feeling of hatred. I-a good translation just may be "grudge." That may be the idea. Now, I need to clarify something. Earlier in the passage, he says, "Be angry and sin not." Commentators generally call that righteous indignation. There is an anger that is not sin. Perhaps it's what Jesus Christ had when He took the whip and cleansed the temple. Maybe it's what the apostle Paul felt, when on Mars Hill his spirit was stirred within him, when he saw the city of Athens wholly given to idolatry. But that's not what Paul is talking about in verse 31. Because whatever it is he's talking about in verse 31, he says, "Put it away." Maybe the difference is the first reference. "Be angry and sin not, let not the sun go down on your wrath." There is an anger that isn't released by an explosion, it is hidden in the heart. It is tucked away down there. You let the sun go down on it. Then you let the moon go down on it. You harbor a grudge. That, my friend, grieves the Holy Spirit. I know of a situation where there were two men who, I think, had this unholy hatred for each other.

I'm not exactly sure what all happened, but I do know this. Both men were believers, both men joined the same church, and both men ended up on the board of the church. And the pastor said

to me, "It is amazing, if he's for it, he's against it! If he's for it, he's against it! And ne'er the twain should meet." It was horrible, the division and divisiveness that it produced in that church. I've been in churches as an itinerate speaker, and I've had pastors say to me, "There's a lady who sits on this side of the auditorium, there's another lady who sits on this side of the auditorium, and they just don't speak to each other ever. They go out separate doors, so they don't have to meet each other." Wouldn't surprise me for a second. Matter of fact, it would surprise me if it weren't the case. If there aren't several, maybe several dozen people, listening to me tonight who have a real grudge against somebody. You manage to somehow push it out of your mind most of the time. But there are times that it comes back and it eats at your gut. I'm going to tell you something, it has devoured your spiritual life. That's where all our power has gone, in those little sins that are almost socially acceptable.

Look at the passage again. He says, "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor." Now that's an interesting word. We-we don't talk about that one very much. We don't even use that word very often. Clamor is loud, boisterous, argumentative talking. That's all it is. It has nothing to do with what is said. It's not what you say, it is how you say it. I remember seeing two preachers once discuss the doctrine of predestination. One of them said, "If you would simply open your Bible, and look right here, you will see that whosoever will, can believe." And the other one said, "But if you would simply look over here, it says that God has chosen them before the foundation of the world." And the other one says, "Yes, but the Bible says that it is not the will of God that any should perish, but that all should come to repent." And the other one said, "But if you look right over here, it says that God draws and that no man can come to Christ

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unless the Spirit of God draws him." And the more they talked, the louder they talked. They got their veins popped out on their neck--

[Audience laughs]

Mike Cocoris:

And they clenched their fists, and I thought any minute they were going to hit one another.

[Audience laughs]

Mike Cocoris:

I remember watching it, scared to death to say anything, thinking to myself, "I wonder if they'll go home and get down on their knees and confess they were clamoring."

[Audience laughs]

Mike Cocoris:

What they did, is they each walked away thinking, "I defended the faith!"

[Audience laughs]

Mike Cocoris:

And what he really did was destroy his own spiritual life and almost his brother. Now, the subject doesn't have to be theology. Subject can be politics, sports, could be anything. But when you lose control, then obviously the Spirit of God is not in control. And He is grieved. In the Bible, one of the symbols of the Holy Spirit is fire. And it is as if this little sin is like a big bucket of water poured on a match. I think the times when our little sins are like a big flood, it puts out

the fire of the Holy Spirit. But look again! He says in this passage, "And evil speaking." Now, that one's rather interesting because the Greek term can mean one of several things. It can mean "speaking that is evil." I mean, a foul mouth that comes from a filthy mind. And by the way, I think it would surprise us, and I know on a Christian campus, you don't go around cussing, in public.

[Audience laughs]

Mike Cocoris:

But I think it would surprise us if we knew how many people in this room in the last 30 days have let one slip. But this word can also mean something else. Look at chapter five verse twelve, "For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret." This cannot only be speaking that is evil, but I think it can also include speaking about evil. I'm almost tempted to call that the evangelical pastime. I have a friend who was saved out of nightclubs, and he calls Christianity "The Club." It's one of our pet pastimes as members of the club, "You hear the latest gossip?" Two get on the telephone, one of them says, "Ahhh, you're [unintelligible] him? Oh, wow, I never would have suspected it from him!" And then, of course, you get convicted. And so the other one piously says, "Now, of course, the only reason I'm telling you this is so we can pray about it."

[Audience laughs]

Mike Cocoris:

May I say, there are some things you have not prayed about. I've been in churches where I have seen the tongue do more damage than if somebody had walked in with a gun and tried to shoot

somebody. I can imagine what that must do to the heart of the Spirit of God. So he says, "Put it away." There's one other in this passage. He says, "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you with all malice. Malice means spite. It is the attitude of, "I'm going to get even with you." It's like, you can imagine two little kids. Any one of them hauls off and knocks down his little buddy. And his mother said, "What'd you do that for?" And he says, "He hit me, momma, so I hit him back." Now that's spite, that's malice. It is this attitude of I'm going to get even. I want you to notice that in verse 31, it says, "All malice." That little word "all" could be translated, "All kinds of malice." Malice comes in different shapes and sizes. Some of it is of the overt kind, like the little boy that wants to hit his neighbor. And some of it is verbal.

I've been in churches where the attitude was, "He didn't shake hands with me last week, so I'm not shaking hands with him this week." "She didn't speak to me the last time I saw her, so I'm not speaking to her unless she speaks to me." Hmm. Do you have any kind of an attitude like that? By what I will do, or not do, by what I will say, or not say, I'll even the score. That is malice. And that, Paul says, grieves the Holy Spirit. I trust by now that the point has been established that what Paul is saying in this passage is that little sins grieve the Spirit of God. Little sins. Now, what do we do about all of that? Well, let me conclude by making several suggestions. First thing that comes to my mind is First John 1:9, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness," that we simply ought to come clean with the Lord and confess these things before Him. I'm sure you know that. So I'd like to say a second thing.

Verse 31 says, "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking be put away." That's different than confession. The Greek word confess, *homologeō*, means to say the same thing. To agree with God. You can confess Jesus Christ. God says Jesus Christ is His Son, I confess, I say the same thing God says about Jesus Christ. God says that activity is sinful. I look at it and I say the same thing God does, I confess that activity is sinful. But that's vastly different than putting it away. This Greek word, put away, was used of taking off an outer garment, just like I would slip off my coat and lay it aside. So you not only need to confess it, you need to put it off. Which translated means, stop it. You see, some people's spiritual life is like a yo-yo. They confess and they do it, they confess and they do it, they confess and they do it, and they confess and they do it, and they're up and down, they're up and they're down, they're up and they're down. They confess and they do it, they confess and they do it, they confess and they do it, and that's their spiritual life. I did it and I confessed it, I did it and confessed it, I did it and confessed it.

And at some point along the line, if you're going to grow, you've got to stop it. And that means just that. Stop it. You can stop it. Do it. It could be an excellent idea for you to have some goals for this semester, and one would be to stop that little sin that grieves the Holy Spirit. But now how do you do that? You ever tried to do that? That's tough brother, let me tell you, that's tough. You ever try to break a simple habit? That's difficult. Well, let me suggest something I think might be helpful, at least it's helped me. Look at the next verse, "And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." And put these two verses together, he says in verse 31, "Put these away." He says in verse 32, "And be ye kind one to another, and tenderhearted." So there's a put off and a put on, which he mentions

earlier in the passage. In Romans, he says, "Be not overcome with evil, but overcome evil with good." I'd like to call that the principle of replacement, that instead of just removing the sins of verse 31, that what you really make as your goal is the replacement of those sins with the virtues of verse 32.

So that you put away the temper and you replace it with tenderheartedness. You stop the fighting, and instead, you practice forgiveness. You put away the malice, and you replace it with meekness. That you turn loose of that lingering hostility, and you replace it with a lasting love. For that is ultimately what pleases the Spirit of God. So that instead of grieving Him, we allow Him to use our hearts as fertile soil to plant the seed of the word so that He can cultivate His fruit. Love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, and self-control. Let me ask you a question. Are you satisfied with the amount of spiritual power you have? Do you hunger? Do you thirst to really have power with God and men? Is it possible that something has drained you of that power? I'm simply suggesting tonight that it might not be something all that complicated, or all that big. It may just be a little bitty thing. So maybe we need to begin this conference and this semester by putting away the little sins.

I read the story once of a man who walked from the West Coast to the East Coast. When he arrived at his destination, he was met with a group of reporters. And they said to him, "What was the most difficult part of the journey?" Now, what would you imagine he would say? The Rocky Mountains. The long distance. The lack of water fountains on the federal highways. No, that man who had walked three thousand miles, had crossed the Rocky Mountains, said, "The most difficult part of the journey was the little granules of sand in my shoes." The thing that irritates

the Spirit of God the most are the little sins in our lives. Let's pray. Before I pray, why don't you pray? If the Spirit of God has pricked you, nudged you, why don't you talk to the Father, and begin by confessing that sin that has grieved Him. And ask Him for the grace to replace it, so that if you've been bitter and resentful toward someone, that you ask Him for a dose of love to shower them with kindness.

[Silence]

Mike Cocoris:

Father, we thank You tonight for saving us, for giving us of Your Holy Spirit, for giving us Your word. And we confess that we become so callous, so insensitive to Your heart and to people.

Father I pray that the Spirit of God would have freedom in this room just now, that He would speak as only He can, that He would convict, that He would be victorious. Oh, Father, in my own heart and in the hearts of all who are here, may the Holy Spirit have freedom. May He be in control. May you give us that power that only comes from Him. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.