We've seen quite a few examples of destructive power in the last few months, for instance the shooting of innocent students in the Florida High School. The power of a gun, the power of hatred, the power of violence, terrible result. The murder of innocent civilians with poison gas in Syria, that's even more recent isn't it, especially the pictures of those little children, could be our grandchildren, kind of brings it home to you doesn't it? Some politician wants to maintain power and uses destructive power to get his way and it doesn't matter who gets hurt. And then of course on the opposite side the devastating missile attack on that country's chemical plants by US and French missiles, there's some destructive power. Even the destruction of lives in this nation because of the drug epidemic. We used to talk about cocaine and now it's prescription medicine that is destroying lives of individuals men and women, young and old. Destructive power of something that is meant to be good, obviously medicine that helps people that deal with chronic daily pain, a godsend for those people and yet used in a way to destroy lives.

So all of these and countless other situations demonstrate the damage that destructive power of all kinds have on people all over the world. So I'd like to examine the subject of power in general and more specifically understand the source and the nature of the destructive power we observe in our lives and certainly in the media taking place all over the world.

In general terms the Bible teaches us that the only source of power is God. In Colossians 1, Paul describes the nature of this power and in this passage we learned three specific things about God's power.
1. All the power that exists is centered in and controlled by Jesus Christ

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him.
- Colossians 1:15-16

When you review this passage you cannot conceive of an authority or a power or any kind of challenge to the supremacy established here by anyone or anything else. Is there any other person you can think of that you can say this about? Is there any other being that you can imagine that you can say what Paul has just said about Jesus Christ? Has anyone that you have ever read of exercised this kind of authority in power? Of course not.

Jesus Christ has all the power and nothing can usurp His absolute position, nothing and no one. Everything created by Him, through Him, for Him. Pretty much everybody else out doesn't it on the power scale. So the first thing we learn from the Bible is that all power that exists is centered in and controlled by Jesus Christ.

2. Christ's power is absolute

He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.
- Colossians 1:17

What kind of power do you need so that everything that exists holds together by you? I mean exactly how much power do you need there? Well you need all the power that actually exists. All other power is dependent on His power, why? Because everything holds together in Him, if He lets something go it has no power.

3. Christ's power is both creative and regenerative
He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything.
- Colossians 1:18

His power is both creative and regenerative. He is the type of force or ability that brings into being that which does not exist. He has that kind of power, you know we here on earth we normally think about power in terms of push, how much horsepower does something have, how much explosive power to sum that kind of power, but Paul says Jesus has the kind of power that brings into being things which are not that's not push or pull type power that's creative power. It's not the power of weight or height or quantity but rather the power not only to give life but to bring back to life that which has ceased to live. Talk about power.

Now that we've briefly examined the source and the extent of power itself and especially the power held by Jesus we can better understand the nature of destructive power because he doesn't here Paul doesn't talk about God's destructive power, He has the power to destroy the world and will, but He also has the power to re-create the world the new heavens the new earth that the Bible talks about.

**DESTRUCTIVE POWER**

Destructive power is a misappropriation of God's power by His own creation. It is the misuse of power granted by God to created beings; power becomes destructive in our hands when the power we gain is not rightfully ours or the power we exercise is not rightfully used and usually one goes with the other. People who grab power or take power that is not theirs usually use that power in an improper way. Now we're not only talking about human beings here, I mean there's destructive power among spiritual beings right. An example of this aspiring for power and destructive use of it by spiritual beings is referred to by Peter and Jude in their epistles in II Peter 2:4 and in Jude 6. Both of these writer refer to the sin of the angels, and what
was their sin he says, not keeping their own positions, the angels did not keep their own positions and thus being punished by God and kept prisoners by Him until the judgment.

But what their sin was about was the misappropriation of power the usurping of God or the attempt to usurp God's power. The only description of their sin was that they left their assigned positions, principalities if you want to call it or authorities and they aspired for another. When you say aspire okay you mean upward you aspire always upward you never aspire downward you permit downward but you aspire to go up. So the sin of the angels was that they aspired to go up well what's up above the angels? Well God is up above the angels; they aspired to God's position they aspired to God's power and did so without God's permission. The general conclusion is that they grasped at a higher position, a greater power, God's power and because of this they were cast down. We're not witnesses of this event the writers only allude to it however what we do see is clear evidence is the subsequent misuse of their power in order to destroy God's creation. If we can't go up and we're going to go down well we're going to destroy what's down there with the power that we do have.

Now I don't understand the relationship between the exercise of angelic power and the manifestation of it here on earth, especially evil angelic power and it's manifestation here on earth I mean do they control men directly, do they order events, are they as Richard Foster in his book Money, Sex and Power, Richard Foster says the power behind certain movements and ideologies. I tend to think that man is capable of misappropriating and abusing power on his own without the help of angels but one thing is sure the evidence of their exercise of destructive power, meaning the evidence of the exercise of angelic destructive power is clearly seen throughout history.

For example the fall of Adam influenced by Satan, he influenced the power of persuasion on Eve; the suffering of Job again an evil spirits interaction with Job, always of course with the permission of God but nevertheless exercised here on earth; the tempting of Jesus direct contact with Satan in the desert; demon possession; the seduction of
Judas Iscariot the Devil himself entered him. So there is an interaction between the evil angel and their power and the earth, we've seen examples of it in the Bible. I'm not so sure that I would go forward and describe exactly how they interact but we've seen that they have in the past. In all of these we see the conscious and deliberate exercise of destructive power by spirit beings in our world. Then of course there's destructive power used by human beings as I said the use and abuse of power is not the singular domain of angels man also men and women have aspired to hold and use power to lift themselves up and destroy others in the world that we live in in order to maintain their aspired position. The power is used to go up, it's used destructively to keep others down so that they can remain up that's normally the trend and the way that human beings use destructive power.

They do it in two main ways: one is the occult. One way humans do this is by the practice of the occult the word occult means hidden and it is an umbrella term for a variety of practices that have as their one goal the manipulation and use of powers beyond the realm of natural human experience in order to somehow affect the change or affect an advantage for the individual here on earth. In other words the occult is calling out to the spirit world in order to help one have power in this world to do something for them in this world: fortune-telling, divination, magic, witchcraft, Satanism, all of these things are form of occultism and are merely a naked grasp for power that does not belong to man. In this case in the case of the occult its power that belongs to the evil spirits it's calling upon evil spirits to exercise their power on our behalf in this world. People play around with that stuff thinking oh it's not serious but it is serious and it is dangerous something that God calls an abomination is something that we need to be very careful with.

A common feature of occultism is that it is an appeal to the spirit world through various exercises and rituals to obtain power in order to dominate others not to serve or edify others. And then idolatry, another way that people misappropriate power is through idolatry. I don't mean the worship of false spirit beings because of sexual immorality or sheer ignorance like the Canaanites did and those who
worship Molech you know who would offer their children to in the
fire of Molech. I refer to the idolatry in the form of pride and selfish
ambition; power infested with pride leads to ego mania, the Bible calls
ego mania: selfish ambition. It's all about me and I will use anything,
any power, any ability that I have to exalt me. Pride makes us think
that we are right and power gives us the ability to cram our vision
down everybody's throat. What was it that Mao Zedong said: the best
diplomacy comes at the end of a gun. There's the destructive use of
power. I have more power than you therefore you will do as I say.

We have abundant examples of this evil manifestation of power and
its destructive outcome in the Bible: King Saul for example so bound
up by his own pride that he would rather kill David than admit that he
was wrong and ultimately he destroyed himself and his reign; and the
Apostles whose constant striving for preeminence nearly destroyed
their circle and consequently would have left the doors of the
kingdom shut. Do we realize how close the Apostles came to self-
destruction? This constant argument among them about who was the
greatest, who is the first, who was the best. We look at that
sometimes and I'm not guilty of that myself you know read that
passage and we say, look at those Apostles they're just like they're
like little kids they're fighting lay you know they're like little kids
fighting among themselves I mean we kind of gloss over that, but if
you stop and think for a moment the destruction that they could have
caused had this thing gotten out of hand. A very serious thing.

Men who are responsible for carrying out God's will and God's
purpose in His kingdom are easily subjected to the temptation to use
power in order to aggrandize themselves or lift themselves up. How
many times in our lives have we been victims of someone else's
unjustified quest for dominance over our minds or our families or our
nation or our very souls. What's the biggest scandal in the business
world today? Facebook and these other large media corporations
what are they doing? They're taking over, they know everything about
us, they can get all the information that they need for us, they know
where we shop they know what we buy what we like what we don't
like, they know our sins our weaknesses they know all of these things
about us. This kind of knowledge gives them power over us and I
don't think that the kind of power that they want to have over us is to our benefit. I don't think they're out to bless us, I think they're out to control us, I think they're out to take our money. They're out to influence us politically economically. And how many times have we ourselves destroyed relationships in our homes, or at work, especially in the church in order to establish our dominance through the misuse of power legitimately granted to us.

I've heard about and I'm not speaking specifically about any one of our deacons but I've you know understood and known that deacons got into a fight over who was in charge and this is my area no this is my area and you know I'm in charge over here and these people will respond to me. And in how many how many churches have been divided because there are three elders and two of them agree but the third one doesn't and because the three can't come to some sort of agreement there's a division between them and a lot of times that division is not over a doctrinal matter it's usually procedural matter how will we proceed when will we spend that money and so on and so forth. That quest for being first, for being important, for being in charge can be so destructive.

So James rightfully says in his epistle,

> For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing.

Destructive power. Destructive power is not just in bombs, it's in character, it's in people. So let's think about what I've said so far about destructive power again just I'm just introducing the subject tonight talking about it briefly I've said that all power is centered in Christ and when exercised by Him is always righteous always. I've also said that destructive power emerges when created beings, both angels and men men women, try to gain power that does not belong to them or abuse the power that does belong to them.

Thirdly I said that spirits have used destructive power in the world to destroy the relationship that man has with God that's the objective of
the misuse of power by evil spirits: they wish to destroy our relationship with God. And then the fourth thing: humans have used destructive power to destroy the creation and also the relationships between people thus damaging their relationship with God. Let's face it, I'm less concerned with if ABC corporation the members of ABC corporation don't get along because one of the supervisors has a fat head you know like a person too proud to take any advice I'm less concerned with that then if that kind of situation exists in the church because in the church the damage is eternal; you lose your job over here you can always get another job over there, you lose your soul over here there is no other soul, you become discouraged because of the way you were treated in the church there's nowhere else to go where do you go after that, to which God do you flee?

So it's always a discouraging experience when as a young Christian our eyes are opened and we see the truly sad state in which the world is in. For some it sends them back into disbelief for others it motivates them to action in the service of the kingdom. If you're one of those I wish to share with you some things to do or aim for as you survey the damage caused by destructive power in the world or even in your own lives. As far as angels are concerned well there's nothing that we can do for Satan and his angels, their end and judgment has already been pronounced in II Peter 2:4, Revelation 20:1. We can do something to protect ourselves however against their influence whatever form it takes.

In Ephesians 6:11-20, Paul talks about how to neutralize the destructive power that angelic beings have and while we're here why don't we go back to Ephesians 6, a familiar passage but I think well worth the time to read in verse 11 what does he say, remember this is the defense that we need to have not against one another or against an unfair boss or a sinful brother or something like this is the defense we need against the destructive power that angels spirits wish to use against us as Christians. He says,

11 Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. 12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers,
against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.
- Ephesians 6:11-12

So there is wickedness in the heavenly places and there is purposeful purposeful action against us coming from the spiritual realm, that's what he says here, otherwise why would we need the protection?

13 Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. 14 Stand firm therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, 15 and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; 16 in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. 17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. 18 With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints, 19 and pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, 20 for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in proclaiming it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.
- Ephesians 6:13-20

There's the not only defense but it's also the offense so we can do something to protect ourselves against the influence of angels and spirits whatever form it takes. Again note the specific reason is to guard against the influence of destructive power exercised by spirits against men and women against believers that's like a true thing. Of course he says become a Christian, a descriptive way of saying that one is truly guarded from the spirits when one is protected by Christ and His word and the Holy Spirit. If the spirit, remember this morning
if you were in my class I said if what's so important about having the Holy Spirit within you? I mean if I can't do miracles and if we can't speak in tongues and if I can't heal somebody and if it can't prophecy, what good is it for me to have the Holy Spirit and I reminded you I reminded the class that Paul tells us in Romans 8 that in Romans chapter 8 that if the Spirit that is in Christ is in you then the same Spirit who raised Him from the dead is going to raise you from the dead that's the importance of having the Holy Spirit, it's a guarantee that you will be raised from the dead. But in this passage in Ephesians the other thing that we note is that having the Spirit within us is also a guard against the spirits who are out to attack us. What does John say? The Spirit that is within you is greater than the spirit that is in the world.

And of course in the last few verses 18 to 20 he tells them to pray. Once in Christ once the spirit is in us we need to pray for each other safety and pray for those who are still vulnerable by asking God to save them through the preaching of the gospel. We cannot disarm the spirits but we can neutralize the effect of their destructive power by the spread of the truth and the only way to keep the darkness from overtaking us is to shine the light of the gospel into this world. You know when people say I went into ministry or I went into the gospel because I wanted to do something, it's hard to articulate it, but in essence a lot of young men and women joined the military various branches of the military because they feel grateful for having grown up in such a great country and they want to defend it especially you know in times of war people you know they joined the military because they want to fight they want to protect their country and it's a noble aspiration they're willing to die to protect their country. Well in the same way a lot of people go into ministry because they see the damage of the destructive spiritual power taking place and they want to fight that. Now they don't use bazookas and machine guns and things like that, no no they use this here they use the power of the Spirit they use the sword of the Spirit but it's a fight nevertheless.

And then something about human beings and their use of destructive power, in the world there are all kinds of power struggles going on between people at every level I've seen no better way of changing the
world than changing myself. Every other method ends up being another dictatorship or oligarchy and so I leave you tonight with three things to strive for as a human being if you wish to break the cycle of destructive power not in the world necessarily but in your life because sometimes you’re the one exercising the destructive power to destroy your own life. First of all if you want to break that destructive power strive for spirituality and not spiritualism, there's a difference. Spirituality is best defined in Galatians 5.

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, self-control; against such things there is no law. 24 Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.
- Galatians 5:22-24

Spirituality is what he is talking about here, it is the genuine practice of love and joy and peace and patience and other virtues generated by who? Oh the Holy Spirit that is within us. Spiritualism is all the fuss with the externals of religion such as the mode of public worship or who receives honor in the brotherhood or what position is correct. These are the same things that the Pharisees argued about with Jesus. True spirituality does not compete except in rendering honor to others. I've often said in the church, a lot of times I don't hear enough a competition between brothers and sisters over the mop, no give me the mop it's my turn I'm going to mop up the fellowship hall now that we have that nice new floor, it's mine give me I'll do it no no I want to do it you you mopped last week I'll mop this week. I don't see that I don't see that argument going. Five weeks in a row I asked, would somebody volunteered to go bring communion to those who are shut in and five weeks in a row I was shut out, nobody volunteered for that no competition for the mop no competition for spirituality.

Again true spirituality does not compete except for rendering honor and service to one another in the church. Secondly strive for simplicity not supremacy. Paul learned the secret of simplicity he learned how to be content in all things (Philippians 4).
The key is not owning enough or being so high that nothing can touch us the secret is learning to be content with what we actually have no matter what that is and I'll even add another qualifier the secret is being content with what we have now. We can get more tomorrow maybe perhaps the Lord will bless us and we'll have more tomorrow maybe but the secret to contentment is learning to be content with what we have today and not casting our eyes backwards and say oh I was all much better back in the old days or when will the day come when I will finally have everything I want or need, the secret is being content with what we have today and I don't just mean money in the bank. The secret is being content with the health that we have today and the prosperity that we have today and the success that we have today and whatever we have today that's what we have no matter what it is. Faith and trust in Jesus Christ permits us to live in simplicity and the simple life opens the door to freedom, opens the door to peace. You can't have freedom and peace without first having contentment.

And then thirdly strive for service not success. A tragic thing in life is that we spend most of our time and energy learning how to shoot for goals and we end up aiming at the wrong targets, we aim at being first when Jesus tells us that true happiness comes when well we're last. We shed blood in order to be sovereign when the security we desire can only come when we shed our pride and become servants. We need to carefully examine our personal and corporate motivation in the Western world not only in our lives but in our country as well. Is our need and our mad rush for technical and political supremacy based on our desire to serve the world as saving agents of a benevolent God or to establish a new world order with ourselves as the top gun? So destructive and creative power are both at work in our hearts in the physical world and in the spiritual world as well. We need to determine which of these is producing whatever happens in our lives, look at the results look at what's in your life what has produced that what kind of power has produced that? Very simply put the difference between the two is that destructive power seeks to serve self and dominate others and creative power seeks to dominate self and serve others. I'll repeat it destructive power seeks to serve self and dominate others creative power seeks to dominate
self and serve other people, see the difference. In the end be assured that destructive power leads not only to the suffering of others in this world but also to the eternal suffering of those who wield it here in this world. God through the power of the gospel continually seeks those who are ready to abandon their dependence on self and the power of the world in order to be free and at peace through the liberating power of forgiveness and restoration in Jesus Christ.

If this has found you tonight if that power that creative power has touched your heart and you wish to submit to Christ in repentance and baptism, if there's anyone here who has not yet done that, that is the first step to contentment, that is the first step to peace, that is the first step to freedom, and we want to offer you that opportunity as many times as we can but certainly tonight as we have shared these observation from God's Word. So if you need to respond to that invitation or if you need the prayers of the church our elders are here to pray with you to counsel you to encourage you so please take advantage of their presence as we stand as Titus leads us in our song of invitation, shall we stand please.

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