

Title: THE POWER OF GOD, EPHESIANS 6:10 – 12  
(Chatham, NJ; 08/26/12, AM) [Pc – Topical]

Theme: Far from dying out Christianity as a religion is flourishing because of the power and strength that come from God alone.

Purpose: To encourage us to draw on divine strength to do things we could not do alone.

Introduction:

1. Christianity has always been a religion driven by the power of God.
2. His power defeated Egypt and delivered Israel from slavery.
3. His power enabled David to triumph over his enemies.
4. His power brought Israel back to Jerusalem after they had sinned.
5. His power essentially saw them through any and all trials.
6. Most importantly, his power raised Jesus from the dead (Eph. 2:19-21).
7. He has empowered the church by sending the Holy Spirit.

I. Religion Just Won't Die; Neither Will God; We live during a time when many elites want to minimize the influence of Christianity, but it won't work; it never has.

A. Predictions that have not and will not come true

1. Mark Twain sent this in a cable back from London, "The report of my death was an exaggeration."
2. ABC news tried to associate the Colorado shooter with the Tea-Party movement at first – "Gee, we wish it were true."
3. The same can be said for the reports about the death of religion.
4. Perhaps they are more like wishes or hoped-for outcomes.
5. Rodney Stark, *The Triumph of Christianity*, chapter 21 readings, suggests these theories are just that: hoped-for outcomes, not based in fact and reality

B. God is not dead either

1. The 1960s heard much ado about the alleged "death of God"
2. Admittedly many people left churches during that time
3. But both God and religion have failed to be lost on the ash heap of modernization and scientific advancement
4. Those things can never replace what God provides
5. Furthermore, humans intuitively know there is something more, something that transcends the material world and holds promise for an afterlife

II. Highways to Zion (Pilgrim ways in their hearts or set their hearts on pilgrimage), Psalm 84

A. Longing for God

1. The psalmist longs for God, 2 (Jewish pilgrims going to Jerusalem)
2. If there is such a thing as a spiritual DNA (I think there is) it is programmed to unite with its creator and all people have it
3. The Bible teaches that we are made in God's image
4. It is natural for the soul, even one that has sinned, to yearn for God
5. Augustine said that the soul doesn't find rest until it comes to rest in God
6. Like the sparrow finding a home, 3, man finds his home in God's house, 4

B. God empowers their hearts, 5-6

1. Strength in God, 5
2. Pilgrims going to Jerusalem anticipated God's presence – highways to Zion in their hearts
3. Their spiritual senses were heightened (I wonder if Jesus' family read this on their journeys to the feasts)

4. Where they passed (6) was sanctified by them

C. The pilgrims seeking God find strength in him

1. Verse 7 – the first indication of God's protection is a reference to them passing by the walls of Jerusalem "from rampart to rampart" (strength to strength)
2. God becomes a shield for the pilgrim heart (9, 11)
3. His desire is for God's presence more than anything else, 10
4. God blesses those who trust in him, 11-12
5. Israel's history by now was rich with stories of God's steadfast love, but the human heart yearns for him even without knowing those stories
6. Acts 17:26-27 says that God has fashioned history to promote the way of the pilgrim's journey back to Him
7. If God has done this, no wonder religion hasn't died

III. Be Strong in the Lord, Eph. 6:10-12 – a need for a higher power

A. God's power available

1. The battles of life aren't just physical, they are spiritual, mental, emotional
2. Do you find strength only within our own souls?
3. On certain fronts we know that we need more
4. But with God we can do more, Eph. 3:20
5. His power within us transcends what we can do for ourselves

B. Words of life, John 6

1. The Spirit gives life and the flesh doesn't, 6:63
2. People know how true this is, and it draws people to Jesus
3. Peter refused to leave Jesus because he had the words of life, 6:68
4. The issue of life weighs heavily on humanity; death is a reality that hits everyone at some point.
5. As long as humanity yearns for life, Christianity will never die out

Conclusion:

1. Those who think that Christianity will perish do not account for the power of God; indeed they don't even believe in it.
2. Neither do they understand the intuitive yearning of the human heart for the one who created it; they think technology or science can provide for all of what a human being needs.
3. They grossly underestimate the nature of the human heart.
4. Religion and Christianity in particular will never die out.
5. We should be encouraged to know that it continues to grow rapidly around the world.
6. Don't listen for even a moment to those minority voices who seek to minimize its power and influence in the world.
7. The Gospel is a power beyond any available and we want you to believe it and accept it.