

I. The Introduction

- A. My message today is part of a series of talks.
- B. The series is called: **Quit Telling Yourself I Can't**
- C. We are following through this little, but power-packed book in the Bible, called Philippians.
 - 1. The time is 2000 years ago. The writer is a philosopher and force of nature named Paul. The recipients are the Christians a city called Philippi. The setting is the Roman Empire, a toxic stew of civility and brutality, liberty and slavery, morality and perversity.
- D. Today we're going to tackle one of the biggest "I can't's" of them all. It's the quiet, subtle lie that you can't live a big, bold, beautiful life.
 - 1. My talk today is called: **Quit Playing Small**
- E. This is the conviction that you're just a pawn on the chessboard of life, being moved around by circumstances, by your past, by other people's decisions. It's the temptation to just go with the flow, because you feel like you don't have the power to create the flow.
- F. Your inner voice says:
 - 1. Don't take that risk, you might fail.
 - 2. Don't speak up, you might get shot down.
 - 3. Don't get your hopes up, you'll just be disappointed.
 - 4. You're a nobody.
 - 5. You're a nothing.
 - 6. You're too messed up, too broken, too addicted, to evil.
 - 7. Who are you to reach for the stars?
 - 8. Who are you to dream bigger?
- G. That voice wants to constrict your life. It wants you to hide. It defines you as a victim. It locks you into average.
- H. The reason that voice has any power at all is because it's tapping into a deep wound in the human soul. Theology calls that wound the Fall—catastrophic failure of human agency which damaged human free and put us in bondage to fear and sin. We are fallen members of a fallen race, and this is why people play small.
- I. But I am here today to declare to you that is not the life God made you for, and it is not the life Jesus saved you for.
- J. God's vision for you is a big, bold, beautiful life.
 - 1. In 1875 there was a young man named William, who suffered from a really tough medical condition.
 - 2. At age 16, due to complications from tuberculosis, William had his left leg amputated.
 - 3. Later, doctors recommended amputating his other leg, but William sought out a pioneering surgeon who managed to save it after multiple surgeries.
 - 4. During his long recovery, 16 year old William wrote a poem that's become famous. It's been quoted by everyone from Winston Churchill to politicians to preachers. The poem is a declaration of resilience and inner strength. Of agency that won't quit. And I'm going to share that poem at the end.
- K. So the question is, how do you get to that big bold beautiful life? How do you bridge the gap between the small life you might be living and the big life Jesus invites you into?
- L. Answer: You have to look at the blueprint. You have to see the life of the only person who never once played small.
- M. I want to look at Jesus today. And I want to show you, from his story, four Power Moves for you to be powerful, and for you to step into to your royalty and dominion.

II. Four Power Moves for Restored Dominion.

A. Power Move #1: The Power of a Secure Identity

- 1. This is the non-negotiable foundation for a life that is no longer small or afraid.
 - a) *"who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God,"* (Philippians 2:6)
- 2. This isn't just a line in an old book; this is the key that unlocks a life without fear! "Form of God" means He had the very DNA of deity. He was, is, and always will be, fully and completely GOD. This is called His **Pre-Incarnate Glory!**
- 3. Long before there was a planet earth, before there was a solar system or a sun, before God spun the galaxies into existence, before the angels, before the starry cosmos, before any created thing, there was God. Just God. Only God.
- 4. And though God was alone, God was never lonely. Because the God we worship is a Trinity—the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
- 5. And here, Paul refers to that second person of the Godhead, Jesus Christ, the Son.
- 6. Paul reveals He was "equal with God." He wasn't a lesser god, a junior vice-president in the corporation of heaven. He was in the eternal circle of the Trinity—perfect love, perfect power, perfect joy. He had nothing to prove and no ladder left to climb!
- 7. He didn't consider His divine status "a thing to be grasped." This wasn't a stretch, this wasn't an ambition, this was an identity.
- 8. He KNEW who He was! His value wasn't based on His performance; it was based on His being. He wasn't striving for value; He was value! That is a perfect, unshakable, glorious sense of self!
- 9. And then there's you.
- 10. Why do you play small? Everything that shrinks your footprint comes from living on the quicksand of an insecure identity. An insecure sense of self lands you on an exhausting, soul-crushing treadmill. You've always got something to prove.
 - a) You're grinding for your worth at work.
 - b) You're begging for it in your relationships.
 - c) You're posting for it online.
 - d) You're performing for it—at home, on the job, on the field, in the classroom—even here at church, hoping that you're good enough.
- 11. An insecure identity is an emotional prison.
 - a) Will they like me? Am I good enough? Will I make it? What will people think? Am I hot or not?
- 12. When Jesus dies on the cross, He didn't just pay for your sin; He made a massive trade! He took your broken, striving, insecure identity and traded you His perfect, unshakable, glorious one!
 - a) Christian, Your value is no longer a moving target based on your performance; it is a fixed point based on Jesus!
- 13. So here is the first power move of a big life, and I want you to hear it like a declaration of independence:
 - a) **This is your DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE: You will stop striving for security and start living from the security He has already GIVEN you in Christ!**
- 14. Your identity in Christ is not a project to be completed; it is a fact to be enjoyed!
- 15. The invitation of the gospel is a call to FREEDOM! It's time to stop living like a pauper when you are the child of the King! Look at the new-creating birth certificate signed in the blood of Jesus and start thinking like the royalty you are!

16. What would you do tomorrow if you knew, deep in your bones, that you had nothing to prove? What fear would lose its grip? What chains of approval would finally shatter?

17. That is the beginning of a big life! It starts with who you are! And in Christ, you are eternally, unshakably, gloriously secure.

B. Power Move #2: The Power of a Sovereign Choice

1. Look at the mission your Champion chose for himself! Notice the verbs.

2. *"but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man..."* (Philippians 2:7-8a)

3. This is not a description of things that happened to Jesus. This is a declaration of things that Jesus **CHOSE**.

- a) He **MADE** Himself of no reputation!
- b) He **TOOK** the form of a servant!
- c) He **CAME** in the full identity of a human.
- d) He made himself a living, breathing, walking, talking man!

4. This was not a tragedy! Not an accident. Not a defeat. This was a sovereign free-will choice made by Jesus!

5. Theology calls this the **Incarnation**! This is the meaning of Christmas Day and it was the greatest act of personal agency in history!

a) Jesus was the author of His own story, and He wrote for Himself a story of the greatest step down the world has ever known.

6. Why? Because chose a rescue mission, and you were the one He came to rescue!

a) He was not forced. He was not manipulated. He was not influenced by opinion or culture of applause.

7. The Bible says He "emptied himself." And I want to be crystal clear on this. He didn't stop being God. He didn't give up one little bit of His divine nature.

8. This just means he willingly chose not to use His God-powers to live His human life. He had all the power of the universe at His fingertips, but He **CHOSE** to become helpless.

- a) He **CHOSE** to be born.
- b) He **CHOSE** to get hungry.
- c) He **CHOSE** to allow his life to unfold as it did.
 - (1) When the Trinity made the plan of Salvation, Jesus raised his hand and said, I'll do it. I accept that mission.
 - (2) This is the essence of sovereign choice. Choose your mission. Choose your purpose. Step onto the field of play.
 - (3) Choose the mission of love, forgiveness, generosity, and grace.

9. Jesus has a dual role here.

- a) Role one: he is the agent of salvation. He makes it happen. He does the work. He makes the offer.
- b) Role two: he is the model of what a saved, redeemed, restored life looks like. It is a life of free will choice as to who will be and what you will become.
- c) That's Jesus. And there was nothing in him that played it safe.

10. Why do you play it safe?

- a) Why might you play the victim?
- b) Why might you blame your past for your present, or your circumstances for your lack of progress.

11. That just means have surrendered your agency! Go take your dominion back.

a) **This is your ROYAL COMMISSION: Stop identifying as a victim and start reigning in life with the agency He died to give you!**

12. The gospel is the good news that the chains that held your will captive were **SHATTERED** by the sovereign choice of your Savior!

- a) He took your bondage so you could have His freedom!
- b) He faced the ultimate injustice so you could be set free from the prison of victimhood!
- c) Life is hard. People will hurt you. Earth's morally broken pain machine will chew you up.

13. If you are saved Christ has given you your dominion back. If not, then that's what's next for you—hopefully today, your call.

14. In salvation, Jesus gives you the power to choose.

- a) You can **CHOOSE** forgiveness over bitterness!
- b) You can **CHOOSE** gratitude over complaint!
- c) You can **CHOOSE** sobriety over addiction!
- d) You can **CHOOSE** to get up one more time after you've been knocked down!
- e) You can **CHOOSE** love, choose generosity, choose blessing, choose grace.

15. So I'm telling you to stop asking, "Why is this happening to me?" and start declaring, "God has made me the captain of my soul under the mighty Lordship of Christ and what the world around me needs is for someone to raise their hand, so it might as well be me. I'll do it. Count me in!" That is the power of a sovereign choice!

16. You are not a pawn! You are an Citizen of Heaven and an Ambassador of the King.

C. Power Move #3: The Power of Inner Dominion

1. For Jesus, the path of perfect agency led Him straight into the heart of the storm:

2. *"...He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross."* (Philippians 2:8b)

a) In theology, this is called the **Atoning Work** of Jesus Christ. It was the means by which he accomplished his mission.

3. Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures.

4. Imagine that moment: The devil was fired up. The demons were on high alert. The world's broken pain machine was redlining on overdrive.

5. The Cross was supposed to be the place where a person's will was utterly demolished.

- a) It was the Roman empire's masterpiece of torture, designed to crush a man's spirit and make him curse God and die.
- b) It was the worst this world could throw at Him—all the pain, all the shame, all the injustice, all the abandonment—all of it, aimed like a knife through the heart.

6. And do not make the mistake of dismissing the torture that this really was for Jesus. Don't say, *Well he was God so he could handle it.*

- a) Yes, he was God, but no, that's not how he handled it.
- b) When Jesus went to that cross, he took it like man. Fully human. No cheating. No resorting to divine powers as a narcotic to deaden the pain.
- c) He felt it. Every lash of the whip. Every blow of the bat used to beat the crown of thorns into his skull. Every punch. Every insult. Every hammer blow driving rough iron spikes through his hands and feet to nail his body to the cross.

- (1) There has never been a man tougher than Jesus.
- (2) There has never been a love stronger to Jesus.
- (3) There has never been a Savior who can compare with Jesus.
7. He felt every bit of it. Anybody looking at that scene would draw the same conclusion, and they would be dead wrong. That wrong conclusion would be... there's that Jesus, another victim of the Roman Empire. Another victim of religious persecution. Another victim of the Giant Pain Machine.
8. There's Jesus, bloodied and beaten and dead... another victim of the devil's dark dominion. A casualty of spiritual warfare. Just another victim. And that conclusion could not be more wrong.
9. The world thought they were killing a failed prophet. They had no idea they were watching a King on His throne. Jesus Christ was nobody's victim.
 - a) He wasn't just being punished; He was paying your debt!
 - b) He wasn't just being shamed; He was breaking the power of shame!
 - c) He wasn't just being silenced; He was crying out your eternal forgiveness!
 - d) He wasn't being defeated; He was crushing the head of the that old enemy the devil!
 - e) He wasn't just dying; He was crushing death so that His death was the death of death!
10. That is dominion in action. When he accepted the mission, he accepted everything that went with it.
 - a) No complaining. No regrets. No turning back.
11. That is agency. That is a King in complete command of His mission, even as His body is being broken.
12. Even at that darkest moment of his death, he was still in total control...
 - a) *"He said, 'It is finished!' And bowing His head, He gave up [sent away, dismissed] His spirit."* (John 19:30)
13. He pushed forth his head and dismissed his spirit. He said, "I die now," and he sent his spirit and soul on his flight to glory. Nobody took his life; Jesus was in command all the way through.
 - a) Not a victim. Not a loser. Not a tragedy. Not a footnote in history. Not a speck of driftwood chewed up in the gears of the pain machine.
 - (1) Nobody could conquer Jesus in his deity. That's obvious.
 - (2) And nobody ever conquered Jesus in his humanity; that's not so obvious.
 - (a) And Jesus wants you to believe it can be the same for you.
14. Jesus transformed the crown of thorns into a crown of glory. He never surrendered. Never quit. Never gave up. Never complained. Never whined. Never felt sorry for himself.
15. And that victory, that power, that unshakable spirit—He did it all FOR YOU!
 - a) He went through hell not so He could give you the keys to His heaven!
 - b) He went through hell so he could unlock inner dominion for you such as you've never known.
16. Quit playing small. Don't let anything crush you.
 - a) Why are you still letting your circumstances rule your soul?
 - b) Why do you let a bad day at work or on the field steal your peace?
 - c) Why do you let an unexpected bill steal your joy?
 - d) Why do you let someone else's opinion dictate your worth?
17. Don't surrender your dominion. Don't hand over your crown so easily.
18. The gospel roars a different story!
 - a) The King who conquered on the cross now brings that very same spirit to live in you!
 - b) His Spirit—the Spirit of power, of love, of a sobriety—is your inheritance, right now!
19. So here is the third power move of a big life, and I want you to hear it like a battle cry:
 - a) **This is your BATTLE CRY: You will move from being a victim of your circumstances to being the ruler of your inner world, no matter what hell throws at you!**
20. Decide it today!
 - a) Your feelings don't get the steering wheel anymore! Your anxiety doesn't get to write the script! Your past doesn't get the final say!
21. The King gets the final say! His peace gets to rule! His joy gets to be your strength!
22. So what are you going to do the next time the storm hits? You can stand on the victory that Jesus won for you, take your stand on the gospel, and command your soul to be at peace. That is the power of inner dominion! Go get it.
- D. Power Move #4: The Power of a Glorious Destiny**
 1. After the cross, after the darkness, after the deafening silence of the tomb, the story pivots on the single greatest word ever spoken over defeat: "THEREFORE!"
 2. *"Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."* (Philippians 2:9-11)
 3. This is the verdict of the Supreme Court of the Universe! This is God the Father slamming His gavel down on the table of eternity and ROARING His final judgment on the career of His Son! This is your Father's thundering "AMEN!" to a life of bold agency and unconquerable love! This is the coming **Coronation Day** for Jesus.
 4. God has given him a name above every name.
 5. What is that name? It's not just a title; it's a statement of absolute reality! It's the name LORD!
 - a) The name that shatters demonic power!
 - b) The name that holds galaxies in orbit!
 - c) The name that is a consuming fire to all evil and will one day incinerate the Giant Pain Machine forever!
 6. And the story ends with this promise: that one day, every knee—every proud, rebellious, cynical, and broken knee—will bow.
 7. Every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord! That is His destiny! That is His coronation! The one who wore the crown of thorns now wears the crown of the cosmos!
 8. Don't miss this, Christian:
 - a) The moment you put your faith in Him, you were wired into His victory!
 - (1) His story became your story! His victory became your victory!
 - (2) And His destiny became YOUR DESTINY... and HIS DESTINY IS GLORY!

(a) **This is your SACRED BIRTHRIGHT: Quit settling for average and seize the glorious destiny your Father ordained for you from the beginning of time!**

9. The voice in your head says you're a nobody.
 - a) The voice of God thunders, "You are an heir of God and a JOINT-HEIR WITH CHRIST!"
10. The voice in your head says, "Play small."
 - a) The voice of Jesus roars, "RISE UP and live the big, bold, audacious life I died to give you!"
11. The voice in your head says, "Hide."
 - a) The voice of the King cries out, "Expand your territory for the glory of the gospel!"
12. So I don't care what you did last night! I don't care what they said about you!
 - a) Your destiny is GLORY, which means your failure is not final!
 - b) Your destiny is GLORY, which means their opinion of you is now irrelevant!
 - c) Your destiny is GLORY, which means you are free from the terror of what you might lose!
 - d) Your destiny is GLORY, which means you can stop editing yourself to get their approval!
 - e) Your destiny is GLORY, which means you can finally stop fighting for your own little kingdom and start living for His!
13. When 16-year-old **William Ernest Henley [image]** lay in that hospital bed, he wrote the poem "**Invictus**"—Latin for **UNCONQUERABLE**. This is the anthem of human grit at its absolute peak:
 - a) **Out of the night that covers me,
Black as the pit from pole to pole,
I thank whatever gods may be
For my unconquerable soul.**
 - b) **In the foul clutch of circumstance
I have not winced nor cried aloud.
Under the bludgeonings of chance
My head is bloody, but unbowed.**
 - c) **It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishments the scroll,
I am the master of my fate,
I am the captain of my soul.**
14. If a man without Christ can declare that from a place of human grit, what in God's name can you declare from a place of divine grace? This is what the church needs. This is what the world needs!
 - a) Believe it: my unconquerable soul.
 - b) Picture it: bloodied but unbowed.
 - c) Declare it: I am the master of my fate, the captain of my soul.
15. He was a captain trying to navigate a storm alone; you are a captain with the Admiral of the universe charting your course!
16. Quit playing small. Quit telling yourself, "I can't."
17. It's time to get up. It's time to stand tall. It's time to take your dominion back.
18. In the name of the King... I say to you...QUIT. PLAYING. SMALL!

III. Prayer

- A. Father, I thank you for Jesus, our Champion. I thank you that the heavy lifting is done, the victory is won, and the glory is coming.
- B. And now, I pray for every single person in this room.
- C. Right now, by your Spirit, I ask you to silence the voice of the accuser and amplify the truth of their secure identity in Christ.
- D. Father, I ask you to shatter every chain of victimhood in this room. Break the prison of the past and heal their broken wills.
- E. Draw those who are not saved to eternal salvation today.
- F. And lift each one's eyes from today's circumstances to tomorrow's coronation. Let their glorious destiny make them utterly fearless. Grant them the grace to, once and for all, quit playing small.
- G. And make us all UNCONQUERABLE, I pray.
- H. For Christ and the Gospel's sake,
- I. Amen.