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THE POWER OF GOD

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"Lo! these are parts of His ways; but how little a portion is heard of Him? but the thunder of His power who can understand" (Job 26:14).

Job gives a few illustrations of the power of God, and then says that these are only parts of His ways; and notwithstanding His manifest greatness there is but little heard of Him. In Job's day men gave little attention to God; He was not in their thoughts and speech. And it is much the same today, for human nature never changes of itself. Man is ever the same proud, hateful, rebellious creature, apart from the inwrought grace of God. There is not much heard about God today, even in the average pulpit. And in most social gatherings the very name of God is taboo. Man is the theme of the popular discourses of the day; it is human virtues that are praised and human achievements that are celebrated. God is in His world providentially, but the world knows Him not.

God's power takes two directions and has two objectives: salvation and judgment. God's power in salvation is gracious; His power in judgment is righteous. God's power in salvation is the expression of His love; His power in judgment is the expression of His holy wrath. And God's power in grace is equal to His power in wrath, for "There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy" (James 4:12). If God is unable to save (convert) "the vessels of mercy," He might also be unable to judge (punish) the "vessels of

wrath." Those who deny irresistible grace cannot logically or consistently ask God to save (convert) sinners; they can only ask Him to try to convert them, or to spare sinners who convert themselves. They cannot ask Him to bring sinners to the Saviour; they can only ask Him to try to draw them, or deliver from punishment those who, of themselves, come to the Saviour.

The popular view of God's power in grace is given by one writer after this fashion: "The banners of God's army halt outside the little fortress of our hearts inviting us to surrender; His mighty love and grace and power wait for our decision." This statement ignores the truth of the depravity of human nature, denies the need of any inward work of grace, and overlooks the truth of the power of the Holy Spirit. It is inconsistent in talking about the "little fortress of our hearts" and at the same time talking about "His mighty love and grace and power." To the same effect are the words of another popular preacher: "We are bidden to make a choice. No man can choose for us. God Almighty cannot choose for you and me. I can put God who made me, and who gives me the breath I breathe, at arm's length and say, 'I will not'; or I can turn to Him, through the gracious operation of the Holy Spirit, and receive the gift of His salvation." What a strange medley of

truth and error! We are bidden to choose and we ought to choose Christ as our Lord and Saviour, but because of inherent depravity nobody makes such a choice apart from the gracious operation of the Holy Spirit in conviction and conversion. It is true that the sinner resists God until his resistance is overcome by the gracious operation of the Holy Spirit--an operation that makes the sinner willing to take Christ as Saviour and Lord--an operation that imparts to the sinner a new mind and a new heart. As another has said: "It is simply preposterous to speak of God Almighty, and with the same breath to say, "I can put God at arm's length." But still another writer takes the prize for his description of a helpless God: "Omnipotence itself is powerless in the presence of rebellion. Even a child can raise its hand and shake its tiny fist in the face of God Almighty, and God Almighty can do nothing." In Prov. 21:1, we are told that "The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water: He turneth it whithersoever He will," but the foregoing statement makes Him helpless in the face of a child.

The power of God is a truth that ought to give peace and joy to the heart of the believer, and strike terror to the heart of the unbeliever. Whether Saviour or Judge, He is the Almighty. Both salvation and judgment call for a mighty God.

THE NATURE OF GOD'S POWER

1. God's power is absolute. There is nothing impossible with Him that is an object of power. He is able to do more than He does do. The exercise of His power is limited only by His desire for in Job He says, "What His soul desireth, even that He doeth" (Job 23:13). John the Baptist tells us that He is able to raise up children unto Abraham of stones. He could have kept Satan out of the garden and thereby spared our parents the temptation which resulted in the terrible ruin of the race--but He did not so desire it. Paul says that He "is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think" (Eph. 3:20). And Christ assures us that "with God all things are possible" (Matt. 19:26).

2. God's power is original and essential. The power of man is a derived power, but power belongs inherently to God. The power of human government lies in their armies and natural resources of the country. It is God's nature to be almighty. His power is not derivative, but creative and original. He gives power to His creatures, but derives none from them.

3. God's power is the life and activity of all His other attributes. All other attributes would be worthless without His power. Without power His mercy would be feeble pity; His justice would be a slighted scarecrow; His promises would be but empty sound; and His love would be as helpless as was the love of Darius for Daniel. And

vain would be all His eternal counsels if power did not step in to execute them.

THE MANIFESTATIONS OF GOD'S POWER

Whatever qualities or characteristics inhere in the Divine nature will sooner or later be manifested or exercised, for there are no idle dispositions in God. His power has been marvelously exemplified in the past as it will be in the future.

1. Divine power appears in creation. "Ah Lord God! behold Thou hast made the heaven and the earth by Thy great power and stretched out arm, and there is nothing too hard for Thee" (Jer. 32:17). At God's word nothing began to be something. He spake and it was done. He willed and it came to pass. "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for Thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are and were created" (Rev. 4:11). The word for create means to make out of nothing. "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which do appear" (Heb. 11:3). "For by Him were all things created, that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him and for Him" (Col. 1:16). And yet all this work of creation did not make Him tired, for He is the Almighty. (Isa. 40:28).

2. God's power is seen in the sustentation of all creation. He upholds all things by the word of His power (Heb. 1:3). By Him all things consist (are held together) (Col. 1:17). In Him we live and move and have our being (Acts 17:28). He gives rain from heaven and fruitful seasons (Acts 14:17). We are to look to Him for our daily bread (Matt. 6:11). But somebody says that all things happen according to natural laws. But God created the law of nature and can use it or work beyond it, and without it. His hands are not tied with any rope of nature.

3. The power of God may be seen in human redemption.

(1) In the birth of the Redeemer (Luke 1:35). What mighty power it took to bring a clean thing out of an unclean! But the Holy Spirit was equal to the task of the incarnation of the Second Person of the Trinity, who became God with us; yea, God manifest in the flesh.

(2) In the miracles of Christ. They were all manifestations of Divine power. The blind saw, the lame leaped, the dead lived, because He willed it so.

(3) In the death of Christ. Here is the greatest of all miracles; the most stupendous and amazing act of power ever exercised: the power to die. Our minds are staggered at this thought:

the power to die! Death among men is the very emblem of helplessness. The lives of men are taken from them in the ordeal of death, but Christ had power to lay down His life. He said, "No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself" (John 10:18). The Lord Jesus Christ was the Actor in the drama of the ages, when He put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself (Heb. 9:26). Let nobody think of Him as the helpless victim of human hate. In His death He was performing the task assigned Him by the Father, as He said, "This commandment have I received of my Father" (John 10:18).

(4) In the resurrection of Christ. He who had power to lay down His life had power to take it again. He triumphed over death, men, and demons. He who is life could not be holden of death. His soul was not left in hades; neither did His body see corruption (Ps. 16:10; Acts 2:27).

(5) In His ascension. Our Saviour had the power to overcome the law of gravitation and ascend bodily to the Father. Hallelujah! What a Saviour!

4. Almighty power is manifested in the regeneration of sinners. In regeneration men have new hearts and new desires created in them; new principles imparted to them; they are turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, being made willing in the day of God's power. When we consider the natural blindness and opposition of the sinner, and the weakness of the human agent (the preacher), and the means used (the foolishness of preaching), the work of conversion appears to be the effect of the power of God. See II Cor. 4:7; Eph. 1:19.

5. The final perseverance of every believer is proof of the power of God. He is able to save unto the uttermost (Heb. 7:25). We are kept by the power of God (I Peter 1:5). No one is able to pluck us out of His hand (John 10:28). "For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world; and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith" (I John 5:4).

6. Divine power will be displayed in the resurrection. What but the voice of the Almighty will be able to awake the dead? What but Almighty power can change this ugly, vile, humiliated, diseased body into a glorious, beautiful, and deathless body? What is it that can give us hope as we stand by the side of the open grave and see it swallow up the one so dear to our heart but the thought of an Almighty God who can and will raise the dead by the word of His power?

7. The power of God will be manifested in the day of judgment. In that day it will appear how pitably weak man is, and how great is the power of God's anger. Think of the power necessary to put down the rebellion of innumerable men and demons! But God will be equal to the task, "when He ariseth to shake terribly the earth" (Isa. 2:21).

"Great God, what do I see and hear?
The end of things created!
The judge of all men doth appear,
On clouds of glory seated:
The trumpet sounds; the graves restore
The dead which they contained before;
Prepare my soul to meet Him.

"The dead in Christ shall first arise
At the last trumpet's sounding--
Caught up to meet Him in the skies,
With joy their Lord surrounding:
No gloomy fears their souls dismay,
His presence sheds eternal day
On those prepared to meet Him.

"But sinners filled with guilty fears,
Behold His wrath prevailing,
For they shall rise, and find their tears
And sighs are unavailing:
The day of grace is past and gone;
Trembling, they stand before the throne,
All unprepared to meet Him."

