

## CHAPTER XII

### THE POWER OF GOD

*"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 thought 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 in wrought 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: who art thou that judgest another?" (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) sinner's; 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 Savior; they can only ask Him to try to draw them, or deliver from punishment those who, of themselves, come to the Savior.

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 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 Savior, 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 Savior 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** (a new definition of omnipotence, C. D. C.) in the presence of obduracy. 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 Savior 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. Job says, "*But he is in one mind, and who can turn him? and what his soul desireth, even that he doeth*" (Job 23:13). John the Baptist tells us "*And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham*" (Matt. 3:9). 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 desire to do so. Paul says "*Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us,*" (Eph. 3:20). And Christ assures us: "*But Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, With men this is impossible; but 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 governments lie 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. "*Let every soul be*

*subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation"* (Rom. 13:1,2).

**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 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. *"Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding"* (Isa. 40:28).

**2. God's power is seen in the sustentation of all creation.** *"Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high:"* (Heb. 1:3). By Him all things consist (are held together): *"And he is before all things, and by him all things consist"* (Col. 1:17). In Him we live and move and have our being: *"For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring"* (Acts 17:28). He gives rain from heaven and fruitful seasons *"Nevertheless he left not*

*himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness"* (Acts 14:17). We are to look to Him for our daily bread: *"Give us this day 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: *"And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God."* (Lk. 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. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father"* (Jno. 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: *"For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to 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, *"No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father"* (Jno. 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. *"For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption"* (Ps. 16:10); *"Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption"* (Acts 2:27).

(5) In His ascension. Our Saviour had the power to overcome the law of gravitation and ascend bodily to the Father. *"And he led them out as far as to Bethany, and he lifted up his hands, and*

blessed them. And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven" (Luke 24:50,51). Hallelujah! what a Savior!

**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. "*But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us*" (II Cor. 4:7); "*And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power*" (Eph. 1:19)

**5. The final perseverance of every believer is proof of the power of God.** "Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them" (Heb. 7:25). We are kept by the power of God: "*Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time*" (1 Peter 1:5). No one is able to pluck us out of His hand: "*And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand*" (Jno. 10:28). "*For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.*" (1 Jno. 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? "*And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go*" (John 11:43,44). What but Almighty power can change this ugly, vile, humiliated, diseased body into a glorious, beautiful, and deathless body? "*For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself*" (Phil. 3:20,21). 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? "*So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O*

*grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (I Cor 15:54-57).*

**7. The power of God will be manifested in the day of judgment.** In that day it will appear how pitifully 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, "*To go into the clefts of the rocks, and into the tops of the ragged rocks, for fear of the LORD, and for the glory of his majesty, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth" (Isa. 2:21). "Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision. Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure. Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion" (Psalm 2:1-6).*

"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."