



## BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Systematic Theology

TRANSCRIPT

“The Power of God, *or* Can God Do Everything? part II”

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee that Thou hast spoken to us through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and we have heard Thy voice, and we know Thy voice. We thank Thee that the shepherd has become known to us, and when he speaks we know him. And we pray, Lord, as good sheep, that we may follow our shepherd and, through our following, by Thy grace, glorify Thee.

And again tonight as we turn to the Scriptures, we pray for the illuminating ministry of the Holy Spirit. May, as we study the attributes of our great God, may he enlighten us, instruct us, exhort us, admonish us and fit us for the ministry and the life that Thou dost have in mind for us. We remember that we have been saved by grace through faith and that not of ourselves. It is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast and that we are Thy workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works, which Thou hast before prepared that we should walk in them. And so, Lord, fulfill Thy purposes in us for thy glory.

For Jesus' sake, Amen.

[Message] Tonight is the second and final in our series on the Power of God, two-message series. Last time, I announced the subject, the “Power of God, or Can God do Everything?”

Now, I introduced it something like this; if God is all-powerful, can he make a round rectangle? Can he make the past future? Can he make today yesterday? Or tomorrow today? Can God lie? Can he deny himself or can he die? Was it possible or impossible for the cup to pass from Jesus Christ in Gethsemane?

Well, these are some of the things that come up as we consider the power of God. Now, last week in the initial lecture, we pointed out the things: power is one of the volitional attributes of God. Now, we have been looking at the communicable and incommunicable attributes, and we are now looking at the communicable ones, and the fourth is power. The first three, knowledge, wisdom and veracity, have to do with the intellectual side of God’s being and nature. But his power has to do with the volitional side of his nature. And so, this is one of the volitional attributes.

I think we shall consider next the sovereignty of God, and so, this will continue in that particular sphere of our Lord's attributes.

Then we pointed out, that power is God's essence energizing outwardly in the highest causality. That is, when we speak of the power of God, we are speaking of his essence as he energizes himself outwardly, not inwardly, within the realm of the Trinity, for the trinal distinctions and the trinal works are not in view when we speak of the attributes of God and his power, particularly. He does exercise power within himself, the power of generation, the power of procession; that is, he sends the spirit. But these are not the types of activities that we think of when we talk about the power of God. We are talking about how he expresses himself outwardly toward us in the realms that we can understand and which we can experience. So, power is God’s essence energizing outwardly in the highest causality.

Third, power may be absolute. His ability to do anything harmonious with his perfections and order; his ability to do all his will. Now when we say, God's power is absolute, we refer to the fact that he can do anything that is harmonious with his perfections. Now, that means there are some things that he cannot do; which are not in harmony with his perfections. He cannot lie, as we pointed out. Then, his ordered power is his ability to do everything that he wills. Now, what he wills is a more limited and narrow sphere than what he could do.

(Now, this is not the fourth point, but Steve Guckenheimer has just handed me a note which says, “A green car has its lights on and the license number is BCM 246.” He doesn't say anything about whether it has a Cowboy’s sticker on it, so that's an incomplete description of the car. But, someone has already jumped up to go out so I guess that has already struck home. )

Fourth, power in God is, therefore, omnipotence and, so, when we speak of God's power, we speak of omnipotence; that is, he is powerful in every sphere. He is able to do everything in harmony with his perfections and in harmony with his will.

Now, God’s power, we pointed out, had limitations; this is the other side of what we were saying. There are things that God cannot do, and I broke them down into four categories.

God cannot do things that are contradictory in themselves. He cannot make a round rectangle. He cannot make today yesterday, or tomorrow, today. If yesterday had not passed away, it would not be yesterday, and if tomorrow existed today, there would be no today. So, it is obvious, that these questions are questions that are suggested by those whose hearts are not right, if they're asking them seriously or, at least, are the kinds of questions not necessary for us to answer.

Second, he cannot do things inconsistent with his nature and being. He cannot walk, for example, for to think of walking implies a physical body and would imply, of course, that He was in one particular place. And, since he does not have the physical

body and since he is not in one particular place only, he cannot walk. These are contradictory, too, inconsistent with his nature and being.

He cannot do, thirdly, things that are inconsistent with his perfections. So he cannot lie. And he cannot die. As the Scriptures say, he also cannot deny himself. So, he cannot die, he cannot lie, and he cannot deny himself. Now, you ought to be able to remember those three things: lie, die, deny himself.

And, fourthly, he cannot do things that are inconsistent with his decrees. Now, that means that after Adam fell in the Garden, it was not possible for God to say, let's begin all over again. As a matter of fact, his decrees had already considered the question of whether men would fall in the Garden. He did not call a council of the Trinity and lay out some new plans when Adam sinned in the Garden of Eden to take care of that contingency, for that had already been planned in the councils of eternity in ages past.

So, he cannot do things inconsistent with his decrees. So, was it possible or impossible for the cup to pass from the Savior’s mouth? Well, our Lord, you know, says in Mark, chapter 14, verse 35 and verse 36 -- Mark is writing and some of this is from our Lord's mouth.

And he went a little beyond them and fell to the ground and began praying that if it were possible the hour might pass him by. And he was saying, Abba, Father, all things are possible for Thee. Remove this cup from me. Yet, not what all I will But what thou wilt.

Now, that was a prayer that was uttered out of our Lord’s human nature as he was experiencing the guidance of God and, perhaps, the next to the deepest trial of his whole human experience in Gethsemane. As a matter of fact, in some ways, the decision of the cross was settled there. And so the answer is: it was impossible for the cup to pass from the Savior in Gethsemane because it was the Father’s will that he should drink that cup.

So, our Lord speaks out of his human nature a natural question, “All things are possible with Thee. If it be possible, let this cup pass from me. Nevertheless, not what I will but what thou dost wilt.” In other words, he asked a question that pertained to the ordered power of God. He acknowledged his absolute power but he was wondering if it was within his ordered power for this to pass away. And, he spoke out of his human nature.

Tonight, we are turning to the manifestation of God's power and the application of it, and so this is the second part of our studies.

Now, just for the sake of some who were not here last time, this is the outline that we were following: “The power of God, or Can God do Everything?” And, we discussed the nature of the power of God; its definition, characteristics, its limitations and then at the conclusion of the hour, we discussed the proof of the power of God, the logical proof -- I should have said something about that a minute ago as the sixth point: The power may be logically proved: if he did not have it he would not be infinitely perfect. And, it may be scripturally proved. And we were looking, as the hour closed, at some of the texts of the Old and New Testament, which express, in one way or another, the power of God. Numbers, 11: 22 and 23 and then we moved on to Psalm 115, verse 3, and the remainder of them, through Romans 1:20.

And so, tonight, we're coming to III in our outline of this subject: The manifestation of the power of God. As you can see from the outline that I have put on the board, the power of God is manifested, demonstrated in the spheres of creation, in the spheres of government or providence, and in the spheres of redemption. And so, first of all, the demonstration of his power in creation.

Now, let's turn just for reference in the Old Testament to Psalm 150 in verse 1. Psalm 150 in verse 1. This is the last of the Psalms of the Old Testament -- the last of the Psalms in the Book of Psalms, not the last psalm of the Old Testament. Psalm 150 in verse 1. Here we read: “Praise the Lord, praise God in his sanctuary, praise him in his

mighty expanse” (Or, as the Hebrew has ‘Praise him in the firmament of his power.’ In other words, the firmament is that which demonstrates the power of God.)

Let's turn back to Psalm 8 in verse 3. Psalm 8 in verse 3. This is one of the Messianic Psalms, which has to do primarily with man as the object of the plans and purposes of God. And so it is Messianic in the sense that it pertains to man and in the sense that Jesus Christ is the perfect man. In the third verse, the Psalmist says: “When I consider Thy heavens the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained. What is man that thou dost take thought of him. The heavens; the work of Thy fingers.”

And finally, let’s turn to the first verse of the full Bible: “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”

And I want now to just make a few comments regarding this question of the demonstration of God's power in creation. I want you to notice, first of all, in Genesis Chapter 1 in verse 1, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” That His power is the first thing that is evidenced in creation. “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” In fact, this very first verse of the Bible is an expression of the power of God. That is the thought that comes home to us as we look at it. He created the heavens and the earth.

Now, we, of course, would worship a God who is wise and a God who is powerful, but it is interesting, I think, that his power comes before his wisdom here. “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.”

Now of course, his wisdom had already operated end plans but the stress of this very first verse of the Bible is upon the power of God. And, that is stressed, too, by the fact that the terms for “god” that is used here is the term *elohiym*. In the Old Testament, the term for God, *elohiym*, is a term that comes from the Hebrew word for “el” which means “God in his strength.” In fact it really means, “The Strong One.” And so, again, the stress is on the power of God. “In the beginning, *elohiym*” Not *adonai*, not Yahweh,

not The Covenant-keeping God, not the Lord who is the Master. But the one who is The Strong One. He created the heavens and the earth. They are the works of his fingers.

And, remember, in Romans chapter 1, when Paul speaks of the creation, he says it is in the creation that we discern the eternal power and divinity or divine nature of God. And so, as we look about the creation, we notice first of all his power, his eternal power, for it pertains to a person who is an eternal person.

The second thing that we can say about the power of God is that his power in the Old Testament is often referred to as that which distinguishes him from the false gods or the idols. In Psalm 135, verses 5 and 6 we find reference to this. And I'll turn to it and read these verses. Psalm 135, verses 5 and 6. Here, the Psalmist says: “For I know that the Lord is great, and that our Lord is above all gods. What ever the Lord pleases, he does in heaven and in earth in the seas and in all deeps.”

In other words, what he has done in creation in the heavens, in the earth, in the seas, and in the deeps. That is what makes him great and that is what points him out as the one who is above all the gods of the heathen, above all the idols. It is the thing that distinguishes him, his power.

Now, why does the creation manifest the power of God? Well, let's think for a moment. In the first place, his power is seen making the world out of nothing. He did not begin with anything. He made the heavens and the earth and the sea and all that in them is, out of nothing. Now, the distance between nothing and something is so great that only an almighty God could bridge the gap

And so, it is not a commonplace -- It may be commonplace for us today to think of a God who can create something out of nothing as really meaning nothing, but if you will reflect upon that for just a moment you will see how great is the power of God. He can bring something out of nothing.

Now, if you and I were to say, I think I would like for a fly to be right here. And, if that fly should come, why I think I would be inclined to bow down and worship you, if

you can do something like that. Now, that is an amazing accomplishment when you think about it, just a little fly. To say “fly,” and there it is. Now, there are certain parts of the country you can do that. You can say mosquito in New Jersey and there one probably will appear. [Laughter] But to say, fly, is an amazing thing if the fly comes. But, here is a God who can call all of the things that are about us into being with just a word, an amazing thing.

When we think of the things that God has done by simply speaking, well, I think that we can see the greatness of God. He is able to call something out of nothing. And the distance between something and nothing is too great for any human being. His power is also seen in the variety of the things that he has created. He has not only created the heavens and the earth; but he has created the sun which clears the air, which enlightens us, which causes the growth of plants and trees and the natural creation about us which ripens them. He has called the moon into existence, which is the earth’s only satellite, which tempers the darkness. He has called all of the galaxies into existence. He has created the stars. He has created the earth. He has created the rocks, the flowers, the sea, the fish, the fowls, the animals. And then, as once before I said, in all of these categories there are thousands and thousands of varieties. And then, he has created man. And he created man out of the dust of the earth which he took, and breathed it into it the breath of life. And man became a living soul, an amazing exhibition of power.

And, when we remember, we cannot even create a fly, and he has done all of this, well then, we can measure the distance between nothing and something. His power is seen in the ease of his work. He did not get together with his instruments and by means of his instruments accomplish his purposes. He did not ask for the advice of anyone.

As a matter-of-fact, the Trinity, when they speak, seem to be in perfect harmony with one another. They say let us create man. And so the Godhead creates without any instruments. They create without any assistance. They create without any models. He



created by his word, which came from his will. And furthermore, his creation was instantaneous. He did not wait for a time.

When man creates anything, he has to wait. Man and their tools. A carpenter is able to do beautiful work, providing you give him tools. It's an amazing thing, you know, to me, how skilled men are helpless without their tools. Have you ever seen a carpenter try to do anything without his tools? Or a painter without his? Or any kind of an artisan? Or a watchmaker without his tools? He’s almost as helpless as anyone else.

God did not require any tools. The TV repairman who comes in your home has got to have his little box of tools; if not he cannot work. But God does not require any instruments in his creation. His creation, actually, is something that he calls into being.

In the Scriptures, according to the language of the Scriptures, calls the things that “be not” as though they were. And so when he speaks, he calls into existence. That, by the way, I think, is why we are said to be the objects of the calling of God. So when we speak of efficacious calling or effectual calling or general calling, we are talking about God’s word which he speaks and which he speaks in power. So, God's power is manifested in his creation. He said, let there be light, and there was light. In the Hebrew, that is very, very emphatic, and there is almost a play on words to express the directness of it. [yehi-or vayehi-or](#), [yehi-or vayehi-or](#). In other words, let there be light and there was light.

Second, (or B) he manifests his power in government or providence. There are several spheres in his government.

First, his natural government. Now, here we deal with preservation and regulation of physical things. The things that he creates he also nourishes. He is, according to Psalm 36:6, the “preserver of man and beast.” And so, the things that he creates, he preserves.

Will you turn with me to Colossians, chapter 1 in verse 17, in which we have a text that refers to the preserving power of God through Jesus Christ. Colossians, chapter 1

in verse 17. Now this is in one of the great Christological passages of the New Testament. It has to do with Jesus Christ who is the second person of the Trinity and it is said concerning him in verse 15, “And he is the image of the invisible God, the first born of the whole creation; for in 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. (Now, notice verse 17 particularly) And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.”

Now, my text has a variant reading. “In him all things endure.” The Greek word, *sunistao*, it means “to stand together.” All things stand or hold together in him.

Now, Bishop Lightfoot, one of the great New Testament commentators, used to say concerning this that Jesus Christ is the principle of cohesion in the universe. That is, there is nothing in this universe that does not exist except by the express permission of Jesus Christ. And to make it just as minute and practical as we can, there is not a single breath drawn by any one in this auditorium that is not by the expressed permission of Jesus Christ.

In Daniel chapter 5, Daniel speaks about the “God in whose hand thy breath is.” And so, he is the one who holds all things together. He has created all things, but he also nurtures and sustains the things that he has created.

He is not only creator of our universe then, he is also preserver of our universe. It is he, too, who is responsible for the propagation of men and the miracle of human birth. And it surely is a miracle. It’s one of the many things that Jesus Christ accomplishes in his work as the preserver of the things that he has created.

The things that were done in Genesis chapter 1 and Genesis chapter 2 were just the beginning of the activity of God. For, down through the years, by his almighty power, he has preserved the creation. And so, all of the forces that we regard as natural forces are really forces that are controlled by God.

Oh, it is possible for us to say, well, we operate according to natural law. Well, yes we do. But God has established that natural law. It is he who is responsible for it. And the time will come when he will say “we will do things a little differently now in the New Heaven and the New Earth,” and things will change.

And so, everything that is being accomplished, is being accomplished by Jesus Christ in his sustenance, in his work of natural government.

Second, his government is exhibited in his moral government. It is the power of God that restrains Satan. Otherwise, he would be always in malice doing the work that he did to Job. He would be winnowing the saints. He would be doing the work that he did to Peter when Jesus said to him in Luke, chapter 22, “Peter, Satan hath desired to have thee that he may sift thee as wheat. But I have prayed for thee that by faith fail not.”

And were it not for the restraining power of God, every one of us would be the objects of the work of Satan.

So it is he who does this work. Occasionally, God permits Satan to do things as he did in Peter’s case. He permits him, as he did in Paul’s case, to test the saints. And in 2 Corinthians, chapter 12, remember when Paul speaks of his test, he said in verse 7, “And because of the surpassing greatest of the revelations, for this reason to keep me from exalting myself there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, to keep me from exalting myself. Concerning this, I entreated the Lord three times that it might depart from me. And he has said to me (that is of course evidence it seems to me that no matter who you may be the answer of God to your prayer may be “no,” as the answer was to the Apostle Paul. So if we get a “no” answer, we should rejoice then.

Now, Paul got the answer “no” once, and then he got it a second time. And, finally, he got the message on the third time. He besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from him. But the Lord then gave him the understanding.) “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness. Most gladly, therefore, will I rather boast

about my weaknesses (Paul says now.) that the power of Christ may dwell in me.

Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties for Christ’s sake. For when I am weak then I am strong.”

And, it came home to Paul that, through this messenger of Satan, which was given him in his flesh to buffet him to weaken him, God’s power might be seen in the victories that were obtained. And he and others would see that it was not Paul, really, who was responsible for these things. It was the Lord, Jesus Christ. It was the power of God. And so Satan is one who is restrained by God, otherwise all of these things would be constantly experienced by us all.

But, do you notice that even in the case of Paul, Satan cannot do anything but just that which is allowed by God. He will say, ‘Now Satan you may go this far but you may go no further.’” As one of the old commentators says, “He cannot move a hairs breadth beyond his tether.” And so he has a chain, and that chain is governed by God. And while he seems to have a very long chain at the present time, still he is contained within the power of God.

Now, not only does God restrain Satan in his moral government, he also restrains sin. If he did not restrain sin, the world would be drowned in a loathsome lake of unbridled licentiousness. And he guides men’s hearts, numerous though they be, with all of their thoughts. It is an amazing thing, when we think about it, that God is able to work in the hearts of all men, not just some, but he guides the thoughts of all men. And he guides them in order that they may perform his purposes.

In the case of Israel, when they were in the land of Egypt, or in the case of the early Church, it is God who is responsible for the things that happened to them. In the case of Israel in Egypt, it is God who is responsible for the things that happened through Moses that finally persuade Pharaoh that it would be a good thing to be rid of the Israelites and to let them go. He is able to guide and direct the thoughts of men’s hearts, he is so powerful.

In the early Church, when all of Jerusalem with all the leaders of Israel were gathered around the little -- the twelve little apostles and their followers, it is God who causes great fear to come upon those who were outside of the church of Jesus Christ in the city of Jerusalem. He is able to work in the hearts of men even in their thoughts and control them for his purposes.

Now, it would seem to me -- this is something that I’m going to comment on later. It would seem to me that the saints really do not have anything to worry about if they will just remember that their God is an all-powerful God, and he is able to move upon the hearts and thoughts of men so that they do his will.

Now, of course, if you are not a good Calvinist, you don’t believe things like that because you don’t believe that God can really move the thoughts of men to accomplish his purposes. You think, rather, that he just has an idea of what men are going to do and so, consequently, you don’t have the sense of assurance that we good Calvinists have. I feel sorry for you because, in that case, you do not have the sense of confidence in God that you ought to have. And, therefore, one day you are up and the next day you’re down. And when troubles come, you’re saying, I wonder what men are going to do. Rather than saying that all things are in the hands of God, and he works in the hearts of men, his purposes to perform.

Now, further, his moral government is exhibited in his redemptive government; or what one of the theologians calls, “His gracious and judicial government.” That is, he is the strength of Israel in the flock of God, amid all of the wolves that are about them. He shows his power in the restraint of natural forces for his own. It is he who, when the three Hebrews are thrown into the fiery furnace, quenches the power of the fire. He is able to do things like that. It is he, for example, who when the children of Israel pass through the Red Sea, it is he who calls the waters down over Pharaoh and his hosts so that not one of them was left, the Psalmist said.

It is he who stops the mouth of the lions. It is he who does all of the things, those things, for example, that are reported to us in Hebrews, chapter 11, and he does them, have you noticed, by the smallest means. He will call out a Moses and an Aaron.

Now, we are inclined to think of Moses as a great man. And he was a great man. He was learned in all of the wisdom of the Egyptians. He was great in his words. But, after all, he was just one man, and a man who was very much afraid of the Egyptians. And God wrought his great work through Moses. He wrought his great work through Moses and Aaron; Moses, a man who apparently could not even speak, or at least did not have the confidence that he could speak. But he worked through those means.

He worked by means of the lice in the case of Pharaoh. He can even move among the locusts and have them perform his will. So he works by the smallest of instrumentalities. It is by the ram’s horns, so far as we can tell, that the walls of Jericho fell down. But it is the power of God, through the blowing of simple instruments like that. It is the simple instrument of Gideon that Gideon uses that causes the turmoil and the confusion and ultimately the slaughter of the Midianites as he faced them. Our God is a great God.

Thirdly, in redemption. It is not without accident that in the Book of 1 Corinthians, Jesus Christ is called “The power of God” in a redemptive context. He is called, “The Power of God” and “The wisdom of God.” It is not without accident that he is called, “The arm of the Lord,” for the figure of the arm is designed to express strength.

Now, do not look at my arm. Think of somebody else’s arm, some man whose arm is really strong. But the arm is designed to represent strength. And Jesus Christ is “The arm of the Lord.”

Now, here is the apex of the revelation of the divine power. If God’s power is seen in his creation; if God’s power is seen in his moral government, his natural government; if God’s power is seen in his providence; then his power is seen in its

greatest extent in redemption. This is the apex of the revelation of the divine power of God. His power is seen in the person who redeems.

Now, let’s think for just a moment about Jesus Christ and the things that are said concerning him in Scripture. Remember, his conception, in Luke chapter 1 in verse 35 we have this amazing text that speaks of the power of God. Luke, chapter 1 in verse 35. Now, I’m trying to save the verse so you are sure to get it because I got it last week when I got in the car and went home, because my wife pointed out to me that occasionally I was so busy talking that I forgot to give you the exact verse reference. And so I’m going to try to be a good boy tonight, and give you the text. Luke, chapter 1 in verse 35. And, I am probably going to get another lecture for saying that...[Laughter] But I like her lectures, they are good. Luke, chapter 1 in verse 35, “And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy offspring shall be called the son of God.”

Now, look at that text for just a moment. What it says are these things: The Father is the father of the human nature of our Lord, by means of the power of The Holy Spirit. “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy offspring shall be called the Son of God.” It is the Father, who is the father of the human nature of our Lord Jesus by the Spirit.

When we hear people say that Mary is the mother of God, there is only a half sense to a statement like that. She is not really the mother of God in any true sense. It is true that of her human nature our Lord was born -- conceived and born. But it is not because of any action that she performed. It is the power of the highest that came upon her; that overshadowed her who is responsible for the holy offspring called the son of God. That’s the first thing that is stated.

The second thing that we may infer from this text is that Mary is the mother of the material nature of our Lord, but not his moral nature. It is not she who is responsible for the fact that our Lord Jesus is a sinless human being. For we read, in Luke, chapter 1 in

verse 47 -- Verse 46, “And Mary said, My soul exalts the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.”

Now, it is evident from that, that Mary possessed a sinful human nature. The doctrine of the Immaculate Conception is not a Biblical doctrine. The doctrine of the Virgin Conception of our Lord is a Biblical doctrine. But the Immaculate Conception; that our Lord -- That Mary was preserved from sin in her birth by the Lord is a figment of the imagination of the Roman Catholic Church. It is not taught anywhere in Scripture and is only proclaimed by Roman dogma. And Mary, herself, would be the first to deny it. She says that her heart or spirit has rejoined in God, her savior.

She recognized that she needed a Savior just as anyone else. So it was the power of the Holy Spirit who is responsible for the conception of our Lord and the preservation of his human nature from the sinful human nature of Mary. So he partook of her nature, but not of her sin, by the power of the Holy Spirit. And so the power of God is seen in the conception of our Lord.

Another thing that we may see from Luke, chapter 1, verse 25 is that by the virgin conception, the body of our Lord is made a fit tabernacle for his holy nature. And so it is through the operation of the Holy Spirit within the womb of the Virgin Mary; it is by his operation that the nature of our Lord, though derived from Mary is preserved from sin and is thus a fit tabernacle for the Son of God.

And as the text concludes, “for this reason the holy offspring,” (That holy thing, that holy nature -- Notice the neuter aspect of it. “That holy offspring shall be called the son of God.” Reference to his pure, holy nature.

Now, when we see the things that are said about our Lord’s conception, we can see the exhibition of the mighty power of God. But remember, there is more to it than just the conception of our Lord. It is in this conception that there comes to pass the union of the two natures. And so the divine nature of the eternal son is now united with a human nature derived from Mary so that in this one person there now exists two



natures: one human; one divine. An amazing thing, the union of the two natures. They are infinitely distant from one another and yet so close.

Now, for those of you who were listening a couple of years ago when we were talking about the Council of Chalcedon, you remember that one of the things that the Council of Chalcedon wrestled with was the question of the relationship between the natures of our Lord within his person. And the thing that the Council of Chalcedon insisted, among other things, was that our Lord was one person that possessed two natures; and that these two natures were not confused within him. They were not united in such a way that there was just one nature. But all of our Lord’s human existence -- all of our Lord’s human and divine existence now is an existence in which he possesses a divine nature and a human nature, and these natures are not confused. He still has the two natures. They are infinitely distant and yet so close.

Infinitely distant, in that one is human, the other is divine; yet so close, because there is one person and the attributes of the one nature pertain to the person and the attributes of the other nature pertain also to the person though they do not pertain to the two natures; so that our Lord may be spoken of as a human being but also a divine person. Amazing thing. Amazing exhibition of the power of God; both in its conception and in its execution.

Remember, too, our Lord’s life of miracles and his glorious resurrection; all of these things demonstrating the power of God: Power in his conception; power in the union of the two natures.

By the way, if we were trying to illustrate the two natures of Jesus Christ, one of the nicest little illustrations -- which does not express the truth perfectly because no illustration of our Lord’s person ever expresses the truth perfectly -- but one of the nicest little illustrations is the illustration of the conjunction of iron and fire. If we were to take a poker and plunge it into a fire, it is not long before the fire is in the poker. And if we think of fire and if we think of the iron and the way that they are united in such a union;

we have a human illustration of the union of the two natures in Jesus Christ. The things that pertain to one are distinct from the other and yet they both pertain to the person. And in the same way, the Lord’s nature -- the Lord’s person with its two natures -- there is a sense in which each one of these attributes pertain to, each one of these natures pertain to the person, and yet they are distinct.

It is not the kind of union of two liquids that we pour together. It is not when we go home, men, and we see that there is about a half a glass of apple juice and a half a glass of tomato juice. Well, that wouldn’t be a good illustration, would it? Ah, apple juice and blackberry juice. So we will just pour them together, and we have a new drink. It is not that kind of union in our Lord’s case. It is the union of the fire and the poker; in which they are distinct. And yet they are joined together.

So it’s evident then that we have the exhibition of a great power of God. When we think of the fact that the little infant in the manger in Bethlehem is also the great God of eternity; what a tremendous testimony to the power of God. And then when we think of his resurrection, what an amazing thing that is. We look back at the Old Testament and we see the exhibitions of God’s power in the history of Jonah, for example, and we discover how -- we look and are amazed at the fact that God is able to have one of his great fishes come at just the precise time and that the prophet is thrown overboard by the sailors. And that there the fish is just as it was appointed by God. And it takes the prophet in and then vomits the prophet out on the shores of Phoenician, somewhere in the East, and we say, “Ah, the power of God.” Or Daniel in the lions’ den, “Ah, the power of God.”

But when we look at the cross work of our Lord and the resurrection, we’re looking at something that is even more amazing; because you see, when God works with the created beings and performs natural miracles such as the miracle of Jonah, and the miracle of Daniel, and the miracle of the three Hebrews and all the other miracles of the Old Testament; he is working merely with human beings or with material things over

which he has complete control. But when we come to the cross of Jesus Christ, he is wrestling with himself. For, you see, there it was necessary for the Son of God to hang on the cross of Calvary under the judgment of a holy God whose law has been broken by men. And so Jesus Christ hangs on the cross under the curse of God. And so there at the cross he does not deal only with the material things, but he deals actually with himself. He struggles with himself. He struggles with his righteousness. He struggles with his holiness. And the two, the mercy and the loving grace of God, struggle there with his holiness at the cross of Jesus Christ and there prevails by the wisdom of God, his grace and his mercy. Now, that is amazing.

It’s no wonder that Jesus Christ is called the “Wisdom of God and the Power of God.” No human being could have ever thought of a plan like that. Now, his wisdom, his power is exhibited in the propagation of the doctrine. Think of the teaching, which I have just expressed to you. Now, if you were a natural man -- and a natural man is a man, of course, who does not have the Holy Spirit. He is a man who has not been born again. He is a man who is not a Christian. He may be a Baptist, but he’s not a Christian. He may be a Presbyterian, but he is not a Christian. He might even be a member of a Calvinist Church but he is not a Christian until he has believed in Jesus Christ and been born again.

Now, this kind of teaching that we have talked about, the union of the two natures in the Son of God, his cross work, whereby, he does enter under the judgment of God in order that God may grant redemptions to those whom he has promised it. And when he raises up the Son from the dead and proclaims him as the Savior of men who recognize that they are sinners: that kind of doctrine is contrary to human reason. Naturally, no one would believe it.

The philosophers in Athens when Paul preached it called him nothing more than just a seed-picker. He was a person who had a little -- a few little bits of knowledge. They acknowledged that. But all of his doctrine made no real sense to them. And they

mocked him. And so this kind of teaching is contrary to human reason. And the very fact that anyone believes it is an exhibition of the power of God. Not only that, but it was contrary to the customs of the people. When Paul went preaching they said that this man preaches things that are contrary to our customs, in Acts, chapter 18 in verse 13.

Furthermore, it is very much contrary to the flesh, because, you see, it tells us that we must be born again. It tells us that we have nothing with which to commend ourselves before God. And so it speaks against our human reason. It speaks against our customs. It speaks against our flesh. And, furthermore, its messengers, for the most part, are not learned men. “Twelve poor men taken out of boats and creeks,” someone has said.

But, folly outwitted wisdom because God was working through the preaching. The methods were not like the methods of Mohammed with his horse and his sword. They were not like Roman legions with their power. They had no personal ambitions of gold or of power; these messengers of the cross. But, by divine power, multitudes melted before the message that they proclaimed. And thousands responded. How can you explain it? The ones who responded even responded so far as the household of Caesar. It’s only by the power of God.

And then the power of God is exhibited in the application of this redemption. The power of God appears in the planting of life. Call it what you like; the new birth is called many things in the New Testament. It is called, for example, a creating. We have been created in Christ, Jesus. It is called a resurrection, for life is brought forth from the dead. We are born again. It is called a regeneration -- I’ve used the word. It is called a conversion. And all of this is a result of the power of God and the greatest power is exhibited in the turning of the heart against the inclinations of human nature; yet, without constraints.

I ran across, this past week, some beautiful words on efficacious grace. The power of God to change the thoughts of men. Now, this is what the author says, “The

Almighty virtue displays itself invincibly yet without constraint; compelling the will without offering violence to it and making it cease to be willed; not forcing it but changing it. Not dragging it, but drawing it. Making it will where before it nilled. Removing the corrupt nature of the will without invading the created nature and rights of the faculty. Not working in us against the physical nature of the will but working to will and to do of his good pleasure.”

Now, that is the mightiest power of God, the work of God in changing the heart of a man so that he responds to the invitation to believe in Jesus Christ, and it is done without constraint.

No man says, “I was dragged into the kingdom of God against my will.” He will acknowledge that he did not wish to, that his will was dead set against it. But God somehow worked; and the time came when out of his work, he responded positively. And he will even say he “chose” to believe in Jesus Christ. And then when he learns theology, he will learn that he chose because he had been chosen, and God had worked in his own wonderful time.

His power appears in the act of pardoning. In redemption -- in creation we see his power of nature and in redemption, his power over himself, again. And it appears in the preserving grace of God. For, not only does he create and preserve his creation, but he creates this new creation and he preserves that new creation. And so, he says, “Through Jesus Christ, I give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish. Neither shall anyone pluck them out of my hand.” My Father, who is greater than all, and no one is able to pluck them out of my father’s hands. So I am in his hands. I am in my Father’s hands, and no one is able to pluck them out of my hand. So, he preserves me.

Now, finally, the application of the power of God. These uses of the teaching come forward, and I’m just going to state them. I have three areas on the board behind you.

First, in instruction. Here are some of the things that we learn from the power of God. First, we learn the “blessedness” of God. Sorrow comes from a will to do, accompanied by a lack of power. They say, I would love to take a vacation and go to the South Seas for six months and lie on the beach. But, unfortunately, we do not have the power to do it. We may even have more serious ambitions. But sorrow and disappointment comes when we have a will to do one thing, but we do not have the power to perform it.

In God’s case, he lacks nothing. He can never be miserable. He’s not ever miserable because, you see, whatever he wishes to do, he is able to do. And so, God is blessed. That’s why he’s called, The Blessed One.

Further, in the power of God is the secure foundation for the worship of God. Worship is grounded in wisdom and power. We say, Edison was a great man because of the power of his magnificent wisdom that he possessed. Henry Ford was a magnificent man because of the inventiveness of the man, the genius within him.

Now, when we magnify this and think of God in his infinite wisdom and his infinite power, then we have the basis for worship. And so we worship a God who is wise and a God who is all-powerful.

As a matter of fact, that is the foundation of prayer. And, isn’t it interesting, too, that in the so called Lord’s Prayer, really the Disciples’ Prayer, it concludes in many of the manuscripts with, “Thine is the kingdom, and the power...” Well, why “the power”? Well, because, if we learned to pray a prayer with any sense of assurance of an answer, we must pray out of sense of a powerful God. If I have any questions about God, when I get down on my knees, what kind of prayers am I going to offer?

And then, thirdly, in instruction, it is, of course, the basis of the sure misery of the wicked. “Can we poor worms strut it out against infinite power?” Charnock says, No. The two divine perfections that are going to shine out in hell are the wrath and the justice of God. And it is his power that shall make it so.

In consolation, capital D, as omnipotence is infinite, so are the inexhaustible streams of comfort from it. He comforts in infliction. And since he is the all-powerful God, and we turn to him, we know that if it is his will we shall have an answer.

Now, isn’t that interesting, too, that when Jesus prayed, “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me?” He prayed: *Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? Eli*, “My Strong One.” “My Strong One” for you see that is the same root word for God, the word that emphasizes his strength. “My Strong One, My Strong One, why hast thou forsaken me?” And so, his prayer acknowledges the power of God. And further consolation, he by his power guarantees our perseverance. For we said, a minute ago, that it is an exhibition of his power; our perseverance. Well, it is his power that guarantees it, too.

I want to ask that you turn with me to John, chapter 6, verse 37 for a moment. I want you to notice the words that Jesus uses. To pay attention to it, if you’re an Armenian, you might become a Calvinist right here. And that, itself, might be a great exhibition of power. For I’ve said before, Arminianism is the religion of common sense, whereas, Calvinism is the religion of St. Paul. Verse 37 of John, 6. (That’s just to keep you entertained for a moment) Notice verse 37,

“All that the Father gives me shall come to me;” “All that the Father gives me shall come to me;” No questions about it. Everyone that is given by the Father to Jesus Christ, shall come. “And, the one who comes to me I will certainly not cast out.” So, anyone who comes will not be cast out. “For I have come down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me, that of all that he has given me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day.”

So if I have been given by God to Jesus Christ, I shall come and everyone who has been given to Jesus Christ; not a single one of them shall be lost by him. That’s the divine side. That’s the divine side. A number have been given by the Father to the Son. And the Son of them shall lose not one of them but raise them up on the last day.

Now, the human side: verse 40, “This is the will of my Father, that every one who beholds the Son and believes in him, may have eternal life; and I myself will raise him up on the last day.”

Finally, in exhortation. So, we close with two other thoughts.

There’s a tremendous value in meditation on God’s power. You know, when I thought of giving this series on the attributes, I must say that I thought, “Now, I’m going to test my own knowledge of the word of God because once you say God is all-powerful, what else can you say?” But, I must confess, that just meditating upon these truths that everybody knows, at least, the general truth that God is all-powerful, has been a tremendous benefit to me. There is a tremendous value of meditation upon God’s power. For lack of it, our fainting hearts often turn from duty by creatures’ blast. How often, when some little thing comes into our lives, we immediately begin to shake like Ahaz and Judah did when they heard that Syria and Ephraim were confederates against them.

And Isaiah says, when the news came to Judah, well everybody began to shake like the leaves on the trees shake when the wind blows. And when things come into our lives, we begin to shake just like the leaves on the trees when the wind blows until we remember the power of God. And that’s why God said to Ahaz. “Ahaz, ask a sign. Ask it in the heavens above, ask it in Sheol below.” In other words, any kind of exhibition of the power of God I am willing to give you in order to sustain your faith. But he, of course, said, in unbelief, “I don’t want to tempt the Lord.”

Well, all of these little things that happen to us are occasions for the manifestation of the power of God. And that, of course, leads to the other thing: the unreasonableness of fear. “How stupid to fear the pride and force of man, a limited power, when we have him who reduces rulers to nothing by blowing upon them so that they are carried away like stubble,” Isaiah said.

It’s a great thing to have an all-powerful God. Let’s bow in prayer.



[Prayer] Father, we are grateful to Thee for the greatness of our God. Thou art truly all-powerful and almighty, and we worship Thee. Nurture our faith in the Scriptures and strengthen us for the experiences of life.

We pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.