

## Power Belongs to God (Part 2)

### To Whom Do You Turn In Your Time of Need?

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As I open this sermon this morning, I am going to reiterate the main points of *The Handwriting is on the Wall* sermon of last evening. We are heading toward the worst period of mankind's history. It is going to take the greatest of resources to negotiate the troubles. Our problems, at times, will be physical, but in the main they are going to be primarily spiritual. We are going to need supernatural spiritual help, and that help is available to God's children through Jesus Christ.

The relationship is already established with the Father and the Son, and, thus, we have access to the source of the greatest power in the universe. In fact, power belongs to that Source. It is our Father in heaven.

We saw that power is not merely brute strength, but also quality of mind, of character—things like love, wisdom, mercy, intellect, judgment, and understanding. He distributes those powers, and many more, as He wills, and His will is always the best, and His will is always accomplished. So the handwriting is on the wall for us. We must make the very best use of this relationship.

I am going to tap into another set of scriptures that tie into our need drawn from what the Israelites sang when they passed through the Red Sea in Exodus 15. They sang "God is my strength." What they were saying is that we do not have it, but God does, and He uses it to our benefit.

You might recall we saw that in the two psalms of David we were in last night. David said exactly the same thing. "God is my strength." They were talking about the source of what appeared before men. Now strength is wealth, and wealth is power.

Deuteronomy 8:11 Beware that you forget not the LORD your God, in not keeping his commandments, and his judgments, and his statutes which I command you this day.

Deuteronomy 8:13-14 And when your herds and your flocks multiply, and your silver and your gold is multiplied, and all that you have is multiplied; Then your heart be lifted up, and you forget the LORD your God which brought you forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage.

Deuteronomy 8:16-18 Who fed you in the wilderness with manna which your fathers knew not, that he might humble you, and that he might test you, to do you good at your latter end; and you say in your heart, *my power* and the might of *my hand* has gotten me this wealth. But you shall remember the LORD your God: for it is he that gives your power to get wealth, that he may establish his covenant which he

swore unto your fathers, as it is this day.

The word "wealth" is used to represent all evidences of prosperity and well-being. We have a tendency, of course, to think of wealth in terms of material things like the size and location of our house, the cost of our automobile, or the fashion of our clothing, but, there is more to prosperity than material goods.

The concept developed in this paragraph also includes qualities like good health, sound mindedness, and the level and breadth of our education. It includes things like understanding and having the opportunity to have a godly perception of what is happening in the world. How valuable is that? All these are forms of powers available to us.

In other words, "wealth," as used here, is not merely the material things possessed. It includes health, the disposition in which we live life, the liberties we enjoy, and the opportunities available to have those things whether we have actually taken advantage of them or not.

For example, Solomon said, "Of the writing of many books there is no end." Think of the wealth of information available in them. God has made these powers available to us. God can prosper us by giving us favor in the eyes of others. It is He who opens doors to favor us, because power belongs to Him, and He chooses to use it to open a door for us. No potential help is beyond His power. In many cases, the things we have come to us as by-products of His promises to Abraham. Are we using them? If not, then why not?

God's fulfilling of His promises provides us with potential valuable experiences lavished on us simply because we happen to be living in an Israelitish nation. I have been to many Israelitish countries, and each one of them has its own peculiar wealth of beauty. I am sure you have noticed and compared the things you have seen on television newscasts of the barrenness of Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iraq, with the nations that you live in. Our beautiful nations with their liberties are included within this concept of wealth. God provides, and He uses them for our benefit at all times because it pleases Him to do so.

This section of Deuteronomy 8 is a warning against pride. We must humble ourselves, never forgetting that we are created, and that we live by the gifts that He provides. We must humble ourselves, remembering that Jesus said, "Without Me, you can do nothing." That awesome statement was made by the One described by the apostle Paul as "upholding all things by the word of His power." It is pretty humbling to know that He is our brother. These verses also tell us something about Him and His power. They tell us where we can go to get what we perceive we need.

Psalms 121 is a beautiful psalm. It is a statement by an author who is not really known. There are speculations apparently based upon fairly good information that perhaps Hezekiah was the author of somewhere around ten of these *Songs of Degrees*.

Psalm 121:1 I will lift up my eyes unto the hills. From whence comes my help?

You might remember that Hezekiah went through a pretty rough time with the Assyrians

camped all around with a siege on Jerusalem. Undoubtedly, he did something like that because this last phrase is actually a question. "I will lift up my eyes unto the hills." The hills could be a symbol of a problem, with dark forests and crevices and canyons going through it, and it looks pretty scary out there. "Well, from where is my help going to come?"

Psalm 121:2-8 My help comes from the LORD, which made heaven and earth. [Hezekiah did trust God.] He will not allow your foot to be moved: he that keeps you will not slumber. Behold, he that keeps Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep. The LORD is your keeper [your guardian]: the LORD is your shade upon your right hand. The sun shall not smite you by day, nor the moon by night. The LORD shall preserve you from all evil: he shall preserve your soul. The LORD shall preserve your going out and your coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore.

Are we looking in the right direction for our help? In the meanwhile, are we taking advantage of the wealth of spiritual opportunity so that we are better prepared for the times that are coming? What we do now may well give us insight into what we will do then. Is a right pattern of accessing God's powers already being established? Are you seeking God?

We are going to go to a rather long section in the book of Romans, to one of the better-known scriptures in all of the Bible.

Romans 8:28-39 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose: For whom he did foreknow he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified. What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifies. Who is he that condemns? It is Christ that died, yes rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For your sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

I chose to insert this because in order to make the best use of the time remaining to our lives, we must perceive ourselves as individual parts of an important, vast, and glorious purpose and plan that God is working out.

My wife and I have been in the church a long time; not as long as a few people in this room, but in that experience I have found that most of us do not think much of ourselves. In fact we have a tendency to think of ourselves as being unimportant. But you are not unimportant! You are among the most important people on earth! That is not anything to get a big head over. You had nothing to do with it. God expressed His will in calling us, and what He did made us important in His eyes.

We do not stand alone, because there are thousands of others out there spread around the world who are part of the same team God is putting together. In I Corinthians 12, Paul illustrated the church as a living body, consisting of many parts functioning within that body. Every part of the body is important to its well-being. Peter, in I Peter 2, was a bit more mechanical in his illustration, but he used a building as a metaphor, and we are individual "living" parts of that building. Even now we are imperfect parts of a team that are being formed into a perfect team. Do you see yourself within this, as being prepared for something that lies ahead? But that preparation requires trust in the One who is preparing us.

In Romans 8, Paul urges us to understand that during this stage of the purpose and plan (the "sanctification unto holiness" process), our cooperation with God is required, or it will not work. This is a concept that many in the world have a serious problem understanding—that with God's giving of grace, works are required after the giving of that gift. Doctrinally, they believe that this is earning salvation. No, it is simply preparing for the Kingdom of God.

Here is a simple illustration I think will help. The World Series is on. Today is the big day for football. Tomorrow is a big day for football. Let us say you are given a free ticket to go to any one of those events and, then, after you go through the gate, you find out that you have to sit in a certain seat. Does following that command to sit in that seat earn you the gift to go inside? No. Not in the least. There is a reserved seat for you where you can participate in what is going on. You did not earn it. It was given. But once there, you are required to do something.

We are being brought to where we will be conformed to the image of Christ, and we will share in the glory of God. That is a shocking statement! It is wonderful, but it is still shocking when we think about God's glory, and we are going to share in that glory. If you do not believe me, look at Romans 5:1-2.

Romans 5:1-2 Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

Romans 8:29 says, "For whom he did foreknow he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren." At the end of verse 30 he talks about us being glorified.

One of the critical issues for the children of God that has the potential to destroy our cooperation with God is the making of wrong choices because of an innate fear that we will not be provided for by God. We fear that somehow He will not respond to our appeals in our prayers, and thus we fear the consequences of what might be a right choice.

Romans 8:18-25 For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creature [or creation] waits for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creation was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who has subjected the same in hope. Because the creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and travails in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also which have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body. For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man sees, why does he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.

We are going through, like it says here, a terrible time because everything has been made (according to God's will) to be subject to futility. But we are saved by hope—one of the big three ingredients necessary for success in this endeavor with God. God is purposefully reminding us that He made life subject to futility, and there is a sense of hopelessness, knowing that we are not yet in possession of the fullness of that hope. God did this in order to prod us to use our faith, trusting Him.

In verse 28, after wading through that period of hopelessness, he begins the remainder of this chapter by flatly and dogmatically stating that if we are going to cooperate through faith, to bring God's purpose for us to its intended conclusion, we must believe that God's watchfulness of us involves every circumstance in life. Do you see that? "We know that all things work together for good."

Some of you had some pretty interesting discouragements in the last year, and maybe even in the last couple of days. I think it is certainly all right to sorrow, to be disappointed and discouraged for a little while, but there ought to be very shortly a period of change in our lives, in our minds, and in our attitudes, and saying, "Hey! Wait a minute now! God just gave me a promise there in Romans 28 that He is watching over me, and He is providing for me, and this discouragement I feel and have experienced is part of that. What am I going to do with it? Am I going to roll over on my side and cry? How will that prepare me for the Kingdom of God? Or am I going to accept the challenge of the test that He put before me?"

Being somewhat frightened about what God is going to supply or provide in any given circumstance is natural for us, but we have to catch ourselves. We saw that in the psalm of David we read last night. They almost all start out with him in a sense of discouragement and

fear, but then he catches himself and says, "Hey! I've got God on my side here. Those people troubling me are going to be sorry!" But he still had to work through it. God just did not snatch him out of it. He made him face it, and it was part of David's preparation for what he is going to do in the Kingdom.

In verse 30 you will notice that the term "sanctification" is missing from the listing of the general stages of God's purpose. Sanctification is the only part of the salvation process in which our cooperation plays a consistent and major daily role. Now why does Paul not list it? I do not believe this was an oversight at all, but that sanctification was deliberately left out because Paul, in this section all the way through to the end of the epistle, wants for us to focus entirely on the absolute certainty of God's providence. At this point in the book he does not want any works that we perform during the sanctification process to make us feel secure in ourselves.

Paul is not saying that God will always do what we want Him to do, but he is reminding us that He will always do what is right for His purpose for us. Granted, that can be scary. God has the necessary powers to do as He sees fit for His purpose, and for us. He is watching you. He is not doing it meanly. He is doing it for your welfare.

The key for the remaining verses in this chapter is in verse 31.

Romans 8:31 What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?

God has the power. God has the will. He does not make mistakes. He does not make empty promises. And, then, in verse 32, Paul lists what God has already done. How much more can God give than His Son? Everything else is minor by comparison. He has already done that for us. Paul then goes on to list what God has already done for all concerns, and our responsibility from this point on is to choose to put these facts to work in our specific circumstances.

The handwriting is on the wall for us, and it is this: that very difficult times are coming that will affect all of us to varying degrees. The only solution to the successful completion of God's purpose for us is to choose to draw on that power and cooperate by faith, accepting whatever it is God chooses to provide in our circumstances. In some cases that might be a lot, but that is the issue. This very issue is one of the reasons why Hebrews 11 appears in the Bible. It is there to give us the comfort of knowing that others who went before us faced circumstances of great variety and, by faith in God, God pulled them through, and lifted them up and over and out of the problem; and, those people are going to be in the Kingdom.

In our situation, it is critical that we come to know God as best we can because He is the Source of our deliverance in any circumstance. Our relationship with Him, through Jesus Christ, is the key we have been given to the deliverance He provides. It is therefore incumbent on us to use our time now to build upon our present relationship with Him, making it stronger and ever more intimate.

We are going to start turning our attention in a little bit different direction. History clearly shows that the primary enemies of the church arise from human influence by Satan and his demons. The clearest example of where these enemies lie is shown in Jesus Christ's and the apostles'

lives and ministries. Were not the already-established religious and governmental leaders of their day, such as Pilate, the high priest, the Pharisees, and the Sadducees, willingly cooperative with Satan in persecuting them? This is where the primary pressure is eventually going to come from. It is going to come from government and churches.

From this point on I am going to turn to many scriptures, and we are going to search into God's authority over these enemies in order to help us see how complete and how all-encompassing God's power is over everything that is going on in His creation. Civil governments and the false church are almost always the church's most dangerous adversary. We are going to begin in John 19:10-11. This took place during Jesus' trial.

John 19:10-11 Then said Pilate unto him, Speak you not unto me? [In other words, "Why don't you speak up?"] Know you not that I have power to crucify you, and have power to release you? Jesus answered, You could have no power at all against me, except it were given you from above: therefore he that delivered me unto you has the greater sin.

The word "power" here refers to civil authorities. This powerful individual—Pilate, who had authority over life and death in Judea—derived his authority from God; otherwise, the authority would not have been his if God had not given it directly to him. The implication from this context here is that Pilate was specifically given this particular civil authority in order to carry out God's will. He had the mindset, and God knew the direction in which he would go.

Speaking of direction, let us look at another interesting scripture in the book of Proverbs.

Proverbs 21:1 The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: he turns it whithersoever he will.

Let me give you the way the *Living Bible* paraphrases that scripture: "Just as water is turned into an irrigation ditch, so the LORD directs the king's thoughts. He turns them wherever He wants."

This helps us to understand God's sovereignty, and it gives us kind of an up on history as well. Now look at this. If the thoughts of the king (who represents the highest and most influential and powerful person in the nation) are in God's hand, and God influences the king's decision when it pleases Him, are not all governors of men completely under the Almighty's sovereign control? Of course. It is clear that God has the power to move all history in the direction He wants it to go. It matters not that there are six billion people, and all of the power that they might possess. God, as one individual, has more power than all six billion of them.

We will now go to the New Testament to a more familiar scripture.

Romans 13:1 Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God. . .

There it is, right in the New Testament, written to Christians! The apostle says, "There is no power but of God . . ."

Romans 13:1 . . .and the powers that be are ordained of God.

What Paul says here makes this implication about God running the whole show, and that God not only has the power to move those already in office, He appointed them there in the first place.

The word "higher" in verse 1 means "governing." The word "powers" following the word "higher" means "authority." The word "power" means "authority," and the word "ordained" means "appointed." Thus, the verse is much clearer when it reads like this: "Let every person be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority but of God. The authorities that be are appointed of God."

Because this is written directly to Christians, and Christians are scattered over the entire world, the implication of this is that God's authority is not just over Israel, not just over the Jews, not just over the Israelites, or the Germans, or the Poles, or the Russians, or anybody else, it is worldwide this way. God appoints the authorities in China, in Japan, in the Philippines, in Indonesia, and wherever.

Who is running things? Are things out of control? No! It only seems out of control because our thinking is not big enough. We do not take God at His Word. He is running things. Certainly he gives men free moral agency, but God makes sure, despite all their decisions and everything, that history is moving in the direction He wants it to go in—and it will. He is serious about His purpose. He is serious about your calling. You are very important to Him, and His eye is on you.

What God is doing here is that He is reminding or revealing to us that all civil magistrates, from the emperor on down to the rulers of the lowest rank, and even including religious authorities as well, in the final analysis owe their appointment and right to govern to God. This helps explain why Moses, in Numbers 16 during Korah's rebellion, immediately declared that the actions of Korah and his group were a rebellion against God Himself. They probably thought Moses was full of vanity, but Moses was reminding them, and us, that he did not put himself in that position. He was appointed to that position. And, so, in rebelling against Moses, they were actually rebelling against God Himself. There is a New Testament scripture which backs up Moses. I want you to turn to that. This is Luke's account of Jesus sending out the apostles.

Luke 10:16 He that hears you hears me; and he that despises you despises me; and he that despises me despises him that sent me.

So, to reject an apostle and his message is to reject Jesus Christ, and to reject Jesus Christ is to reject the Father who sent Him. It vibrates all the way up to the top, because when we do that, though we may not know it, we are actually calling God's governance of His creation into account and saying that He is doing things wrong.

John 5:17 But Jesus answered them, My Father works hitherto, and I

work.

The word "hitherto" means "My Father has been working right up till now, and I work."

Jesus is telling these people that God rules in the affairs of men. He has not gone way off somewhere. He is actively involved in bringing His purpose to pass all the time. That is what God is doing. He is working the details of His purpose. And, it is not just with the Church of the Great God. God has people all over the world that He is working in and through—converted and unconverted. He uses unconverted people to make decisions that will move their nations in the direction God wants them to go for His purposes.

Right now the United States, Great Britain, and much of Europe, are under the gun, you might say, of the Persians over in Iraq who are pushing at the King of the North. One of these days they are going to push too far and they are going to be blasted, as it were, into kingdom come, according to Daniel 11. But right now God is moving them for His purposes to put the United States, Britain, and so forth, into the position He wants for them to be thinking about, to be tested by, and whatever.

Are you beginning to see that all power belongs to God? This is His creation, and He will do with it as it pleases Him. But in the midst of this vast milieu of activities that are going on all over the place, His children are living, and He is watching them too. In Psalm 11 it says that "His eyelids behold the sons of men." He is watching the whole world. Jesus has His special attention focused on the church. That has been delegated to Him, as we will see in just a bit.

At any rate, we are confronted really with a matter of clear logic to anyone who believes God. Now how is any enemy of ours going to get around and deflect or nullify the real unseen Power who stands behind and above all the visible powers that be? It is His will that will stand. And so the question remains: To whom do you turn in your time of need? God wants us to think of Him first, all the time. You go right to the top. You get the best advice, the best consideration, the kindest hearing, and the most merciful response, even when we have done wrong.

We are going to look at this power issue more specifically in terms of Jesus Christ, so let us go to Matthew 28:18.

Matthew 28:18 And Jesus came and spoke unto them, saying, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth."

Again, the word "power" here is better understood in terms of authority. It is the Greek word "exousia" (Strong's # 1849). Something to notice here is that Jesus said that all authority was given Him. In order for this to be true, somebody greater is required to give Him that authority. Let us chase this out a bit.

I Corinthians 15:25-28 For he [Jesus Christ] must reign till he has put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. For he has put all things under his feet. [There are two pronouns here. Now who is the "he" and who is the "his" here?] But

when he says all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him. And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.

All you have to do to figure that out is that sometimes the pronouns are referring to the Son, and sometimes the pronouns are referring to the Father. The One who put the power in Jesus' hands is the Father, and the Son is going to rule until everything that Christ has to put under Himself is accomplished, and then He will turn everything back over to the Father.

In Matthew 28:18, the One who gave Jesus the authority is the One who has greater authority, and that is the Father. So the Father is excepted from that word "all" there. We are going to go to another interesting section in the book of Colossians. Jesus is being spoken of here.

Colossians 1:14-19 In whom we have redemption through his [Jesus'] blood, even the forgiveness of sins: Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: 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: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence. For it pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell.

What Paul is doing here is stressing Christ's positional authority, meaning His status in relation to all others. So that is where Christ stands, whether these beings are human or spirit.

The word "firstborn" in verse 15 is not a reference to His being created, because other verses clearly show that He has existed eternally. The term "firstborn" indicates "primacy" in terms of rank. People at football and basketball games and baseball games shout, "We're number one!" Paul is saying that Christ has the primacy above all, of course excepting the Father. Thus Paul is showing Christ's rank in relation to all other beings. There is a reason why Paul is doing this, because of things that he writes a bit later in the book of Colossians. There is an example of this in Colossians 2.

Colossians 2:7-10 rooted and built up in him, and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving. Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. For in him dwells all t