

God: What Is He Like? Part 1

Selected Scriptures

1352

We're continuing a brief series in our morning hour on "God: Is He? Who Is He? And What Is He Like?" This is just a little hiatus from our study of 1 Corinthians, and then we're comparing it Sunday night with a series on "Satan: Is He? Who Is He? And What Is He Like?" This morning, of course, we'll look again at our theme, "God: Is He? Who Is He? And What Is He Like?" Have your Bible handy, we'll be looking up some scriptures as we go. A very helpful book on the nature of God is the book by A.W. Tozer, entitled *The Knowledge of the Holy*. Among other things that he says in the book, a significant statement, I think, is this one, quote: "The history of mankind will probably show that no people has ever risen above its religion, and man's spiritual history will positively demonstrate that no religion has ever been greater than its idea of God. Worship is pure or base as the worshiper entertains high or low thoughts of God. For this reason, the gravest question before the church is always God Himself, and the most portentous fact about any man is not what he at a given time may say or do, but what he in his deep heart conceives God to be like," end quote. He's saying the most important thing that a man has is his understanding of God, and the most important message the church has to give is the knowledge of God. And I think he's right.

The reason that we want to propagate a right understanding of God is twofold. Number one, it is because there are some people who do not believe in God. They are either philosophical or practical atheists. They either believe there is no God or they act like they do. And for this reason we desire to propagate the truth of the true God that people may know there is a God and they may know who He is. Secondly, we preach God and declare God not only because there are people who don't believe, but there are people who wrongly believe about God. That is, they have misconceptions about Him. This is true even in Christianity. Now, I am appalled at what some Christians assume God is. We might say that believing the wrong thing about God is idolatry. When we think of idolatry we think of somebody in a mud hut with a little god on his table, or whatever, and bowing down. Or we think of a pagan temple, very elaborate and ornate, with a lot of people burning incense. But idolatry is much broader than that. Idolatry is simply thinking something about God that is untrue of Him. It is postulating anything about God that is not right. In its fullest stage, it is creating a god. In its secondary stage, it is making the God who is into something that He isn't. And maybe in its third level, which even Christians are guilty of, it is thinking thoughts about God that are untrue of Him.

Psalm 50:21 says, "Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such and one as thyself." God says, "You thought I was like you." And that's precisely what men have done, for the most part, is in idolatry made God into their own likeness, or into imaginations that belong to their own minds. The essence of idolatry is entertaining thoughts about God that are unworthy of God, and it can come in a lot of forms. So, we declare God, not only because there are people who don't believe in Him, either in philosophy or practice, but there are also people who believe wrongly about God, and we must declare the right things about God, and so it's very important. Now, we said last time, first of all, our first point was to ask the question, "Is He? Is there a God?" We said that reason, and revelation, and

experience corroborate to say there is a God.

Secondly, we asked, “Who is He?” We found out that God is a spirit. He is a person. He has personality. He’s not a floating energy cell. He’s a person. He is one God, and yet three persons in that one God. So, He’s spirit, a person, three in one. Then we came, initially, to the introduction of our third point, “What Is He Like?” What is this existing, spiritual, three-in-one person like? Well, the only way we can know what He is like is to find out how, in this book, He has revealed Himself, and the revelation of God we catalog into things we call attributes. The attributes of God are the definitions of God’s character which He Himself has disclosed to us in the Scripture. Now, let me preface the study of his attributes – and we introduced one of them last time. We’ll cover a couple more this morning, and we’re just giving you the basic ones. First of all, let me say this: that God is, in the beginning, incomprehensible, so anything we try to understand about God, we are understanding in a very limited fashion. We are just seeing the tip of the iceberg, and there is so vastly more about God that it beggars language to talk about it. We can’t get to it. It’s far beyond us. For illustration, just this: God is infinite. There is no end to God, and so our simple little half-an-hour discussion of any one given thing doesn’t begin to do justice to the essence of God’s person.

God is incomprehensible. I think that’s the reason that we ask the question, “What is God like?” rather than, “What is God?” Because to say, “What is God?” is to put it in an area where it’s very difficult to answer, but if we say, “What is He like? There are some things that we know about, and He is like those things. What gets us into trouble, though, is when we try to make God too much like what we know. We look at human love, and when God’s love doesn’t behave like human love, we say God doesn’t love. But that’s making human love the absolute, infinite design of love and God isn’t measuring up, and that isn’t the way it is. God is like some things. That’s why the Bible speaks of His likeness or appearance, and when Ezekiel talks, he says, “He was, as it were, in the appearance or likeness of a man.” In other words, it’s sort of like this.

We also cannot speak of God because He’s incomprehensible in other than negative terms. And by that I don’t mean we’re negative about God; I simply mean that to define God we have to say what He is not. For example, when we say God is holy, we mean He has no – what – sin. But we have to think of it that way, because we could never conceive of absolute holiness. The only thing we’ve experienced is sin. So holiness, to us, is not sinning. Do you see what I mean? We couldn’t say, “God is limitless,” without understanding that that means God doesn’t have any limits, ’cause we understand limits, so we just say He doesn’t have any. So we have to add a negative to everything, because we live in a world of limits, a world of confinement, a world that is so opposite God that we have to say, “God is like,” but not like anything we understand. Now, if you’re not sufficiently confused, don’t worry about it.

Somebody asked me when I started this brief little series, just a break in our 1 Corinthians study, was I gonna cover all the attributes of God? And I said, “No. The reason I’m not is because I don’t know all of them.” This person, “Well, aren’t there 11, or are there 13, or?” And I said, “No.” Let me tell you what I believe. I believe that God is an infinite being, and probably has an infinite number of attributes. I’m not convinced that the attributes that I know about God are all there is about God. Do you realize, for example, just to give you an illustration of it, that an attribute of God is anything true of God’s character? An attribute of God is anything true of His character. Now I would never imagine to know everything that is true of God. If God is infinite, there is an infinity of truth about Him, there is an infinity of attributes, and there’s no capacity for me to understand that infinity. I don’t need to; I only need to understand some of them.

All right, let's look at some of these attributes. Last time we covered just the beginning one, He is unchangeable. Do you notice that that's a negative? When we think of the fact that God is always the same, we say that means He doesn't change, and we have to use a negative, because we only understand change. So, we say God isn't like us. He doesn't change. Malachi 3:6: "I am the Lord, I change not." James 1:17, "In whom there's no shadow of turning, no variableness." And we saw how that that's tremendously comforting, securing, and such a refuge to the Christian, but at the same time, to the unbeliever, that doctrine is a fearful one, a doctrine of judgment, a doctrine of unchanging wrath on sin.

Now, let's look at the second one and begin for our time today. The second attribute of God that I want you to consider – and we're really dealing with His absolute attributes, those that are characteristic of His nature; next week we'll get into the ones that relate to us, like grace, and mercy, and love. But the second one is God is everywhere at all times. Theologians call this omnipresence. God is everywhere at all times. And I want you to hold on to your hat, because this is liable to flip you if you don't be careful. Some of these thoughts are so far beyond our capacity, you're going to have to strain a little bit. God is everywhere at the same time. God is infinite. There is no end to God. His being fills all of endless infinity. Wow. Staggering. Jeremiah 23:24, he says: "'Do not I fill heaven and earth,' saith the Lord?" First Kings 8:27, "Will God dwell on earth? Behold the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain Thee." Then Solomon said, "How much less this house that I built?" As God is before all things eternal and after all things eternal, He is within all things and without all things. He is everywhere. No limits. God is infinite. You can't find the end of God. There is no end. He has no limits.

You know, that was interesting that historically people have tried to confine God; even many of the Jews who were uninformed, or at least ignorant from self-imposition of ignorance, they tried to make God a confined being. And many of the Jews felt that God dwelt actually in the temple. That's where He lived. That He was like the false gods, and that's why Solomon said in 1 Kings 8:27 that He does not dwell in this house. This will be the seat of His Majesty on earth, temporarily. This will be the symbol of His presence, but He does not dwell here in His essence. Remember this, people, the symbol of God's presence is never the prison of His essence.

The Jews also historically have been accused of worshipping the God of Israel, who simply was none other than the god of the mountains. And the Syrians believed that they had the god of the valley. So the Jews had the god of the mountains, and the Syrians had the god of the valleys. The Syrians did their religious thing in the valley, and the Jews always went to the mountains. In fact, the Syrians said, "The Jews think God is either in the mountains or above the mountains, and they go to the tops of the hills to sacrifice in order to be nearer to Him, if He happens to be up above the mountains." And you know, you look at Jewish history and it was true; they did a lot of stuff in the mountains, didn't they? It was Horeb, or Sinai, or Mount Gerizim, or Jerusalem, which is the mount. And the prophets went up into the mountains, and Jesus went up into the mountain to pray, and Jesus went in the Mount of Olives, and so the conclusion of some of the critics is that Israel simply worshipped the god of the mountains – and not the god of the valleys, that was a different god. Well, it isn't true. There are as many times in the Old Testament you can find them worshipping God in the valley, maybe, as you could find in the mountains.

Some others thought that God lived in heaven and that that's where He was confined, and I think this is kind of a – whether we really think about it clearly or not – this is kind of what Christians think, that

God is sort of up there. And, you know, when you think of God, you think of a puffy place, with a big, bright throne, and sort of a foggy thing sitting there, and we imagine God way off somewhere in a celestial palace – and He’s everywhere. The wiser Jews knew better, and the wiser men know better. God is everywhere. Now, doesn’t this make some problems? It does, and I want to answer those problems.

Number one, people say, “Well, if He’s everywhere, then He’s impure because He’s defiled by the things that are impure that are touching Him. If God is in the world then He’s being touched by impurity.” I would say this in answer to that, God is in all places and in everything. He is in the heart of a sinner by inspection and conviction. He is in hell by his acts of judgment, for it is He who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. His essence is everywhere, but it never mingles with any impurity. If you want an illustration, God is like the sun’s rays. The sunbeam may fall on a manure pile in a field, but that manure pile never ever lays any of its corruption on that sunbeam. That’s the same with God. God is the essence of who He is, He is unmixed with anything, and nothing defiles Him. He is His own antidote against evil. Illustration: Jesus came into the world, walked through the world, and when He was all done, it was said of Him that “in Him there was no sin.” He was among men, and yet totally undefiled by them. And God is as Jesus was, as a sunbeam is, it can touch anything and be undefiled by it. God is His own antidote against evil.

Now, other people say, “Well, another question about the omnipresence of God, if God is everywhere all the time, then how come the Bible says that He is either nearer to someone or far from someone?” And you know, it does say that. In fact, it says in Isaiah 55:6 that He’s near the ungodly, and elsewhere in the Old Testament regarding Israel, that He’s far from them. So how is it that He’s near and far? Well, you have to think of God in terms of two words: essence and relation. God is everywhere in His essence, but is specially certain places relationally. In other words, God’s presence is there, essentially, in essence. But only in the godly is He there relationally, and you can illustrate it simply. We’re all here this morning; I’m here, and my essence pervades this place. My voice bounces off the walls. My presence sort of dominates the situation, and we’re all here. I am here in essence. You are getting a representation of John MacArthur this morning.

Relationally, I’m really tied to three or four people sitting on the front row – my wife and sons, and the rest of my family, and some of you particular people who are either relatives or very, very close friends of our family. Relationally, I am something to somebody; essentially, I am something to everybody. God essentially is everywhere; relationally, He dwells in the hearts of His own children. And isn’t it true that the New Testament tells us this? Don’t we find that when we become a Christian, Christ is in us? Doesn’t Ephesians 3 say that God “fills us with His fullness?” Ephesians 5, “the Spirit fills us with His fullness?” “Christ in you,” Colossians, “the hope of glory?” When God comes to dwell in us relationally, that’s different than Him being in us essentially, or in His essence. But believe me, folks, He had to be there in His essence before He could be there relationally, because He had to do some convicting work and some saving work. So God is everywhere; everywhere – all the time. He doesn’t have to go anywhere, He is everywhere.

“Well,” you say, “what does it mean in Genesis 11 when it says He came down from heaven to check out that city?” Oh, it simply means He gave it His immediate attention from the perspective as a city. God didn’t have to come somewhere, God is everywhere. He is everywhere essentially; He is in the lives of His own children in terms of relationship. And another thought, in the Old Testament it said that God dwelt between the wings of the cherubim on the ark of the covenant, or He dwelt in the temple, or so forth or so forth. What does that mean? That simply means, as in Solomon’s case, that

there were some places where God established the throne of His majesty symbolically. To represent a majestic God, He set up a temple.

Today the throne of God is represented by the church, the lives of believers. In the Kingdom, the throne of God will be represented by the throne in Jerusalem, where Christ reigns. In heaven, it will be represented by the throne that is pictured in Revelation 4 and 5. That simply is a symbol, and as I said before, the symbol of His presence is never the prison of His essence. He's everywhere. Now, people, when you think that God is everywhere, that is a staggering, staggering thought. And He is unmixed with anything. Nothing corrupts Him. Nothing touches Him to change His character in any way at all. God made His creation. God mingles in His creation, absolutely unaffected by it.

Now, what kind of a doctrine does this become when we apply it practically? Let's look, first of all, to the Christian. What does it mean to me as a Christian to know that God is always present in my life? Always there – essentially and particularly to me, relationally? Number one, it means comfort. When I stop to think that God is always there, that's a very comforting thing. It doesn't matter what I'm going through, God is there. And it doesn't matter whether I realize He's there or not, He's there. And I know there are times in our lives when we may cry out and say, "God, where are You; You seem so far away." He's no further away than He's ever been. He's always there. He said, "I will never," Hebrews 13, "leave you, nor forsake you." If God said that, that's what He meant, because He can't lie. God never leaves us.

In Philippians 4:5 and 6, at the end of 5, it says: "The Lord is at hand, be anxious for" – what – "for nothing." Don't worry, He's there. That's what it means. It's not talking about the second coming, it's talking about Christ being there, God being there, the Lord being there. He's there all the time. Realize it. This is His attribute. This is His character. Can a Christian be separated from God? No. Nobody in the universe can be separated from God essentially, and a believer could not be separated relationally. He is always there. Enoch, for example, was in the presence of God, and he just walked out one day, took a walk with God. They kept on walking. He walked right up to heaven. Unbroken fellowship – it's a symbol of the believer. God is with us now as much as He'll be with us in eternity. He dwells within us. That's comfort.

Second – this is a great truth – the practical aspect of omnipresence is support; not only comfort, but support. You know, when God called Moses to be the prophet that He wanted him to be, and to go and proclaim His message and get Israel out of bondage, Moses said to God in Exodus 4, "But I have a speech problem, I can't talk." You remember the story. And God said this: "I will be with your mouth." Isn't that terrific? That's a practical aspect of the presence of God. "I'll be with your mouth." To say that God is present doesn't just mean He's sort of standing there watching, and every time we do something wrong, *whap*. No. It means that He's there in support of our service. Listen to this, we all know Matthew 28 where He says: "And lo, I am with you always." Do you know what that is in reference to? Listen: "Go into all the world, preach the gospel, make disciples, baptize, and lo, I am with you always." Not for comfort in that portion, but for support in service.

People say, "Well, I don't know if I can witness; I don't know if I have the power to witness." And they want the pastor to do that. You know, "Would you come, and you talk?" Well, you know, it's difficult for me to do that. They won't usually won't listen to me. Howard Hendricks says. "The difference between me and you is I'm a paid salesman and you're a satisfied customer." You know, I'm paid to be good, you're good for nothing. And you see, the same resource that I have, you have. The power of God is there. "I'll be with your mouth" - go, preach, make disciples, baptize, and I will be with you.

That isn't comfort, friends, that's support – that's service. Listen, the doctrine of the omnipresence of God is extremely important in a practical sense to the believer.

Thirdly, this is a shield against temptation – a shield against temptation. You know, anytime Satan wants to get to me, he's got to go through God? In 1 Corinthians 10:13, it says: "There is no temptation taken you but such as is common to man, but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that you are able, but will with the temptation also make a way of escape that you may be able to bear it." The point is, God says, "Nothing will ever come to you that I will not give you the strength to resist." And, people, that's different for every believer, because every believer is at a different level of maturity, and different temptations will have different results. What would cause somebody else to crumble, you may be able to handle. But at every individual level, God is there to defend that believer against something he couldn't handle. What a tremendous promise. God is present to defend us against temptation.

Fourthly, from a practical standpoint the doctrine of omnipresence is a motivator to holiness. To know God is present always is to know that everything we do, we do in His presence. When you sin, whether it's a sin of thought, or a sin of word, or a sin of act, it is done in the presence of God. You know, I – just think about that from this standpoint. Most of us like to sin, rather, when someone isn't watching. We may not care so much about certain people in our life or family who know that we have these problems, but outside of that - for example, I have, in just my meandering through the world, come across a lot of Christians that I know, and caught them right in the middle of some kind of thing that they were very embarrassed about. And, man, I've seen some quick moves; *whoa*. You know – not quick enough, but quick. "Ah, John, well..." – see? That happens to me quite often. Well just imagine – it's no big deal if I catch somebody doing something, that's not the idea. I'm not, you know, who am I to make a difference? But just realize this, whenever you sin, it is as if you ascended the clouds, walked up to the foot of the throne of God, and performed your sin right there. You see, you're doing what you do in the presence of God. A very sobering thought.

David's integrity in his life, when he finally got it straightened out, was based on the statement: "All my ways are before Him. I can't do this. He's there." See. Job – what was the basis of his integrity? Job 31:4, "Does He not see my ways?" God sees it all. My integrity is based on the fact that everything I do, I do in His face. That's what Proverbs means when it says: "In all thy ways, acknowledge Him." In other words, in everything you do, realize He is there, and that alone will take over the direction of your paths. You see, living the Christian life is simply this: ordering my life as if it is done in the presence of God, knowing that it is. You know, what we wouldn't do with an evil man present, and what we wouldn't do with a godly man present are only just preliminaries. We shouldn't do anything that we wouldn't do in the presence of God, in the very throne of heaven. To believers, then, the doctrine of omnipresence is extremely important. Now, what about an unbeliever? How does he relate to this? To an unbeliever it is also important to understand that God is everywhere. In Psalm 21:8, it says: "Thine hand shall find out all thine enemies." No escape. A man who is an evil man has no hiding place. There is no escape. There is no way out. There is no place for him to retreat.

Amos chapter 9 gives us insight into this, as well as Obadiah, which is the following book; let me read you Amos 9:2, "Though they dig into Sheol, there shall Mine hand take them." That's the grave. "Though they climb to heaven, from there will I bring them down. Though they hide themselves in the top of Carmel, I'll search and take them from there. Though they be hidden from My sight in the bottom of the sea, there will I command the serpent, and he shall bite them. Though they go into

captivity before their enemies, there will I command the sword and it shall slay them, for I will set Mine eyes upon them for evil and not for good.” God says - I don’t care where they go, I’ll find them. In Obadiah verse 4: “Thou shalt exalt thyself like the eagle, though thou set thy nest among the stars, from there will I bring thee down.” There is no place to hide. And the ungodly man must realize that no matter how he tries, no matter how he runs, he may decide he doesn’t want to go to church, he doesn’t want to read the Bible, he wants to avoid any religious discussion, he wants to put God out of his mind, he may not think about God, but God has His thoughts centered on him.

Job 26: “Dead things tremble from under the waters and their inhabitants; Sheol is naked before him, and destruction has no covering.” God un.masks everything by his presence everywhere. Further, in Job 34, verse 21, it says, “For his eyes are upon the ways of man, and he sees all his goings. There is no darkness nor shadow of death where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves. There is no hiding place.” Proverbs 15:11: “Sheol and destruction are before the LORD; how much more, then, the hearts of the children of men?” If God can see everywhere in the universe, how much more can he see the hearts of men? In Psalm 139, David says, “Where am I going to go? If I fly, and if I run to the furthest point, You are there.” And he says, “If I take my flight on the wings of the morning” – in other words, if I ride a sunbeam, 186,000 miles a second, 8 minutes to the sun, I can’t get away.

The thief steals because he thinks no one sees. The adulterer commits adultery because he thinks no one sees. The liar lies because he thinks no one finds out. God knows. Just because God is invisible doesn’t mean He isn’t there. God never slumbers and never sleeps. In Hebrews, chapter 4, and verse 13, a very poignant statement: “Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in His sight, but all things are naked and open unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.” Everything is seen by God. Isaiah 65:12, God said, “You did evil before My eyes.” Proverbs 15:3, “The eyes of the Lord are in every place beholding the evil and the good.” God knows everything. He’s everywhere. God is unchanging, and God is everywhere.

Thirdly, God is all powerful. This is a staggering concept. Our God is all powerful. Now what does that mean? That means that we have to use a negative - there is nothing He can’t do. He has no bounds to His energy. Job 9:19 says: “If I speak of strength, lo, Thou art strong.” God is called El Shaddai, *El* is the name of God, *Shaddai* means almighty, the Almighty God. In Revelation 19:6, it says: “Alleluia, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.” He is powerful. He is strong. The psalmist said, “Power belongs unto the Lord.” Now, when we say God is powerful, what we mean by that – now, hang on to this – God has no limits to His power. He can do anything – anything. And listen to this: He can do anything as easily as He can do anything else. Did you get that? It is no more difficult, it is no more difficult for God to create a universe than to make a butterfly – no more difficult. He can do anything, and He can do anything as easily as He can do anything else. You say, “Where do you get that?” ‘Cause it doesn’t take Him any effort to do anything. You say, “You mean there’s no effort on His part? Absolutely no effort.

I’ll give you an illustration. In the morning I get up on the Lord’s Day, and I realize that I’m going to expend a lot of energy, jumping around up here, and waving my arms, and hollering at everybody – for about three hours. And that takes a lot of energy, more energy than you’d think. Your mind is running at a very rapid rate, and you’re burning up a lot of energy. So in the morning I drink my protein and take my vitamins, and I charge out. When I get done, after that third hour, and go home, I wilt. And I say to my wife, “Wife,” - I shouldn’t say that – but I say, “Patricia, I need something to eat.” And I’ve got to replenish. Why? Because all the energy that I’ve had has been used up, and I have to have a replenishing. God never needs to be replenished. There is no source of replenishing God.

Where would He go? He's already everywhere. There's nothing outside of God.

Now, Isaiah 40:28 says this when it says: "The Lord is never weary." There is no dissipation of energy. So the Lord can do anything, and He can do anything as well as He can do and as easily as He can do anything else, and thirdly, He can do anything He wants to do. Did you know that? He not only has the power, but He has the authority, not only to do anything, but to do anything He wants to do. You see, built into power like that is authority to use it. Mark this - God's power, God's authority, and God's will are all equal to His nature. God can do anything. He can do anything by power and by right, and He will do anything by power and by right that He wills to do, and He will only will to do things consistent with Himself. That's why, for example, He can't lie. He can't tolerate sin. He can't cherish an impenitent sinner. He can't punish an innocent. He can't do anything that violates His essence, because His will is always consistent with His essence - who He is. But God can do anything He wants. Psalm 115:3 says: "Our Lord is in heaven, He does whatever He pleases."

People sometimes ask you the question, "Why did God do this?" And often I've said, "Because He wanted to." And people say, "Well, that isn't a sufficient answer." That's because you don't understand God. God can do anything He wants. And in Romans chapter 9, when the argument Paul is giving there about election, and about people being chosen unto salvation and so forth, and the pharaoh, and Jacob and Esau comparison, and all of this, and you start arguing, "God, why did You do that?" And Paul says, "What are you, the pot going to jump up and ask the potter why he made you that way?" That's the potter's right. Don't question God. God can do anything, and He can do anything as easily as He can do anything else, and He can do anything He wants. But He only wants to do what's consistent with His nature, and He never violates His nature, ever. He can't lie - can't love sin - can't violate His word - can't forget what He's done. And the will of God is only that which is worthy of His person.

God is powerful. Now, you know, when you begin to see God's power, there are four areas in which I see it most clearly. Number one is creation. Now, the Bible tells us that He spoke and it was done. Psalms 33:6: "He spoke and it was done." He commanded and they were created. You know, when you stop to think about the power that's in the created universe - we know now that we can split an atom and make a big mess, you know, a big explosion. Well, if we could set off a chain reaction that would engulf the entire universe, we wouldn't have gotten nearly to the power of God, because God is greater than anything He ever made. And you know what else is amazing? He did it without any advice. No one helped Him. You would have thought He would have created one man in a preliminary, just to get some advice - ha-ha - because we're always so eager to give it to Him. But in Isaiah 44:24 it says - I love this - "He stretched the heavens alone, and He spread out the earth by Himself." He willed them, and they existed at the instant that He willed them. In fact, in Romans 4:17 it says: "He calls the thing which are not as if they were." And once He does - they are. His power is seen in creation.

I think, too, His power is seen in preservation. You know, when He made the world, the Bible says, "He upholds all things by the word of His power." Somebody might say, "Well, you know, you say God never gets tired; how come He rested on the seventh day?" He didn't really rest. Not a bit. If God had rested on the seventh day, do you know what would have happened to everything He made on the first six? It would all fall apart. "Well," you say, "what was He doing?" He was giving us a pattern. We get tired - He doesn't get tired. He was establishing a pattern for man. Man needs rest and replenishing. God was just as active, because His energy constantly flows, the seventh day as He was the other six - upholding everything He'd made. Hebrews 1:3: "He upholds all things by the

word of His power.”

I think, too, thirdly, that God’s power is seen in redemption. You know, and maybe even more power in redemption than creation, because in creation there was no opposition – no devil to be subdued, no death to be conquered, no sin to be pardoned, rooted out, no hell to be shut, no death on the cross to be suffered. That was creation, but in redemption all of that struggle, the great display of power on the cross as Christ died and redeemed men to Himself, and then what makes it startling is God called to Himself a whole bunch of nobodies, and made them confound the mighty, didn’t He? Read 1 Corinthians 1 and 2; God took “not many mighty, not many noble,” just the common folks and set them out against the world, and then by the time you get into the first few chapters of Acts, they’ve turned the world upside down. That’s God’s power, redeeming, saving power.

Fourthly, I think God’s power is visible in His ability to raise the dead. Do you realize that God has so much power that someday, at the end of the age, God is going to raise from the dead every human being that ever lived, righteous and unrighteous? You said, “Well, I knew that believers were going to be raised, but is it true the unrighteous?” Right – John 5:28, read it right there, the resurrection unto life and the resurrection unto damnation. Read Revelation, where you find at the great white throne judgment, all the ungodly are brought before Him, chapter 20. They’re all there. They’re risen from the graves and from the seas that hold them. Tremendous resurrection power. What power. This is our God – all powerful.

Now you say, “What does this mean, John?” Let’s get to the practical, and we’ll wind up our thoughts. God is all powerful but what does that mean to the Christian? Number one, that is a basis of our worship. The practical aspect of this doctrine is found in the simple statement, I think, of 2 Kings, chapter 17, verse 36. Listen to what it says: “But the Lord who brought you up out of the land of Egypt with great power and an outstretched arm, Him shall you fear and Him shall you worship.” We are to worship God because of His power. His power is a basis for worship. We come together and praise God because of His mighty power – there’s none like Him. Second thing, for the Christian the power of God is not only a basis of worship, but a basis of daily confidence, daily trust. You know, I get back to that thing where I feel like I’m inadequate and I can’t do anything, and then I go to Philippians 4:13 which says: “You can do all things through Christ who” – what – “strengthens you,” who powers you. Because of His power, we walk day to day in confidence. “We are filled with the fullness of God,” Ephesians 3:19 says, and then 20 says, “and we are able to do exceeding abundantly above all we can ask or think according to the power that works in us.” God’s power becomes the basis of our daily lives.

Then also the basis of our resurrection hope. As a Christian, I look forward to rising from the dead. I figure if I don’t go in the rapture, I’ve got pretty good chance of dying – 100% guarantee, I’m going to die. And I’m also hoping that I’m going to be resurrected. Well then, what is my confidence? You know, I go to a funeral, and it doesn’t look real hopeful. They bring a body in there, and they draw the blood out, and they pump it full of that embalming fluid, and it lies there, and they make it up and put it in a casket. And you know, you might say to the guy, “Well, you know, someday that’s going to come out of the grave.” And he’ll look at you kind of like, “Boy, you don’t know what I know, fella. There’s no way that thing’s going to be doing any moving at all.” And it’s pretty hopeless. And there they are, the casket’s open, the dead thing is there, and it’s all somber, and you stick it in the ground, and in goes the dirt, and phist, that’s it. And some Christian stands up at the funeral and says, “And someday this dear brother is coming out of the ground.” And you can just hear some people snickering in the back, you know. “How do you know that? Who can pull that off?” You go to 1

Corinthians, chapter 15, and, you know, my confidence for resurrection is based on the power of God. “Now is Christ risen from the dead and become the first fruits of them that slept.” And in verse 52: “In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump, the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.” How so? It is God who gives us this victory. The power of God is the basis of our worship, the basis of our daily strength, the basis of our resurrection hope for the future.

Additionally, it is the basis of our comfort. And whenever I worry about my problems, I remember my God, and I realize that there’s nothing that I’ve got that’s too hard for Him to handle. Psalm 121, “I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills; from whence cometh my help? My help cometh from the Lord.” The next statement is the key to the whole thing: “Who made heaven and earth.” Now if He could do that, He can handle me. Confidence – comfort. The doctrine of God’s power is the basis of worship, the basis of daily trust, the basis of resurrection hope, the basis of comfort – next, it’s the basis of our victory. In Ephesians chapter 6, it says: “Be strong in the Lord and the power of His might.” If you’re going to fight the enemy, you have to have His strength to do it. When the adversary comes and you’re on guard, you don’t fight the enemy; you go tell the commander and he fights for you. The basis of victory is the fact that He’s powerful. “Greater is He that is in you, than” – what – “he that is in the world,” and we were talking about that last Sunday night, weren’t we? Satan’s an amazing being, and he’s very, very powerful, but you know something? He’s under my feet, right where he belongs – right where God’s put him. The victory is mine in Christ – tremendous power is available to me.

Next, for the Christian, the doctrine of God’s power is the basis of assurance. You know, I’m saved, and people very often ask me if I think I’m going to stay saved, and I always say I do. And they say, “Why do you think so?” And I say, “Because God’s just powerful enough to keep me. And the only person who could take me out of the hand of God would be somebody more powerful than Him – and there isn’t anybody.” John 10:29, verse 28, we have to read: “I give them eternal life. They shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand.” Why? “My Father who gave them to Me is greater than all, and nobody’s able to pluck them out of My Father’s hand.” There is no more powerful being in existence than God, and when God’s holding something you don’t get it away from Him. In Romans, chapter 8, you find the same thing: “Who shall lay any charge to God’s elect? Who’s going to separate us from the love of Christ?” And he names all those things: principalities, angels and everything possible – no, no – nothing. God is all powerful. The basis of my assurance is the power, the absolute total power of God. In 2 Timothy 1:12, that’s why Paul said: “I’m not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I’ve committed to Him against that day.” The confidence came, you see, in the knowledge that God was powerful.

Now further, and lastly, from the standpoint of a Christian, the doctrine of omnipotence is the basis of humility. It’s really pretty easy to be proud if you don’t think about God; if you just think about you. As soon as you start thinking about God, you realize you’re nothing. In 1 Peter 5:6 it says this: “Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God. Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God.” And the result? “He will exalt you.” Why should I humble myself? Realizing the might and power of God. God’s power is the basis of my humility, realizing I’m nothing – I could be nothing – I could accomplish nothing – I can do nothing apart from Him. Humility. And so, this doctrine of omnipotence is tremendously practical. What about the non-believer? What effect does it have on someone who’s not a Christian to know that God is all powerful? Well, a very dramatic effect, frankly.

First Corinthians 10, Paul is writing there to the Corinthians, he says in verse 22 of 1 Corinthians 10: "Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy?" Are you trying to make God jealous? Because if you are you, better think of this question: "are we stronger than He?" In other words, if God is jealous, and He gets jealous when you don't worship Him, you better be stronger than He is, because He's going to fight against you. What is this saying to an ungodly person? When you don't worship God, God gets jealous. And when God gets jealous, God fights against those He's jealous regarding. And when He fights against somebody, He wins, because He's omnipotent. It's a tragic thing to realize that men in this world who do not know God, who do not worship God, who do not love Christ, are being attacked, ultimately in judgment, by God, who is omnipotent. And unless they are stronger than God, they have no defense, and, believe me, you have no defense; for no man is stronger than God, who made him. In Job, chapter 9, verse 4: "He is wise at heart and mighty in strength. Who hath hardened himself against Him and prospered?" Nobody – nobody. Chapter 10, verse 7: "Thou knowest that I am not wicked, and there is none that can deliver out of Thine hand." Job says, "This is happening to me. I don't understand it, but I know there's nobody that can touch You. Nobody can rescue me."

When God takes a hold of a life, there is no rescue on a human basis. The only individual in the universe who rescues you from the hand of an angry God is Jesus Christ himself, who is God. In 2 Thessalonians 1:7, it says: "And to you who are troubled, rest with us when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels and flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power." For those who know not God and obey not the gospel, God is going to unleash His judgment power; a fearful thing to think of. No wonder the writer of Hebrews said, chapter 10, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

Why are we telling you these things about God? We're telling you these things about God because this is God's nature, and this is what He has revealed to us. We want you to believe in God, and we want you to believe in the God who is God. Let me say this in conclusion. Did you notice that the same truths about God in all instances have two different results? To know that God is unchangeable, everywhere, all powerful, is to a Christian bliss, right? Joy. But to an unbeliever, the very same thing is fear. You see, the issue isn't the character of God, people, the character of God is established; the issue is you. A man who smashes himself against God, continually trying to live the way he wants to live no matter what God is like, is a fool. God is who He is. God does what He does. And you have to get in line with it.

Now, next week we're going to look more at how God's grace and forgiveness goes by all those terrible things we've done, and accepts us when we come to Christ. The key for this morning, and just this in conclusion, this is who God is, this is the God who requires of you that you worship Him. And we simply, in love, invite you to do that. The greatest thrill that we can possibly have is to see somebody come to know God. This is His desire. He invites you to come to Him on His terms. By faith in Jesus Christ, you're rightly related to Him, you accept the sacrifice of Christ, God accepts you. Instead of the things about God being fearful they become blissful. Let's pray. Father, thank You this morning for Your Word, for its truth, for its power in our lives; we pray that You'll bring those who desperately need You, whose hearts have been melted and warmed by the Holy Spirit. Bless the classes to follow, Father, and even those that are ending right now, and this day, and these people, every, every precious life. We thank You. We commit ourselves and the Word to You, that the two may bear fruit; in Christ's name. Amen.

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