

POWER ...

By

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“Power belongs unto God” (Psalm 62:11)

The terrifying waves of power that surge back and forth across the land, tossing with them the flotsam and jetsam of human beings uprooted and unmoored, are but the superficial outcroppings of the ancient power-struggle between God and Satan.

There are subtle differences in the way this power is applied, and it is of the utmost importance that Christians know the difference. Jesus astonished the world with His power over physical elements. When the Jews say that He had power to multiply bread and fish, to heal the sick, to raise the dead, to control the elements of nature, they saw in Him their opportunity to overthrow their political enemies, to set up their own government and rule over the rest of mankind by the sheer force of physical power. Twentieth-Century-Jews still aspire to the same political aim, without Christ’s help, and many churches are being misled along the same route.

But it is not this kind of power God uses to accomplish His purpose today. God’s power is executed through His word. “By the word of Jehovah were the heavens made.”... “He spoke, and it was done” (Psa. 33:6, 9). There is power, sheer power, in the word that comes from God. In the parable of the sower all was accomplished through the seed that was sown. Jesus said that the seed was the word of God (Luke 8:11). This is the same word that has accomplished God’s purpose from the beginning; not only were all things created by God’s word, but even today He is “upholding all things by the word of His power” (Heb. 1:3). Peter writes that “by the word of God” the world was once overflowed with water and that “the heavens that now are, and the earth, by the same word have been stored up for fire, being reserved against the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men” (II Peter 3:5–7). God’s word will yet be demonstrated in the final consummation of His purpose; “the Lord will execute His word upon the earth” (Rom. 9:28).

In Christ’s prayer for His disciples, He said, “sanctify them in truth: thy word is truth.” It is this truth of God, when it is perceived in the mind, that exerts a force upon man beyond all other forces in the world. If God’s word is of such dynamic power that it can bring forth the whole creation, it is also able to bring forth the creature that He desires when it is received, believed and allowed to have free course in man’s conscious thought. Jesus sent the apostles forth to teach His word. He sent the holy spirit for the express purpose of refreshing their minds with that word (John 16:13). As they went preaching that word, kings trembled and common people who had not a thread of power, politically or financially, became influential in changing the course of the world and were raised to great heights of joy despite bitter persecution. Christians are exhorted to take the “sword of the spirit which is the word of God” and, armed with this weapon ALONE, to fight the good fight of faith against the devil. “The word of God is living, and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword...” (Heb. 4:12). It is with this word that we are to “bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ” (II Cor. 10:5). Man is

created with a mind whereby he might think in harmony with the Creator. The sin of Adam and Eve consisted of their refusing to rely upon God's mind and deciding for themselves what to think and do, apart from the Creator's word; hence, they partook "of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and, in doing so, cut themselves off from the power by which they were kept in fellowship with the Creator. In becoming Christians, we retrace these steps, by receiving the word of God, believing it and obeying it. We are "begotten again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, through the word of God, which lives and abides" (I Peter 1:23). After becoming Christians, we are to be transformed into the likeness of Christ "by the renewing of (our) minds" and this renewing is based upon the "good and acceptable and perfect will of God" as given in His word (Rom. 12:2).

Where the word of God is presented in its unadulterated purity, in its stark-naked brightness, there is the power of God to transform man, to lift him up from ignorance and darkness, to turn him from slavish traditions to the freedom of Christ and to direct him from the labyrinth of confusion, to the clarifying purpose of God.

Where there is the free-flowing of God's word, there is growth in grace and knowledge of Christ and sufficient power to overcome the temptations of Satan. This power is none other than God's power. It depends not upon the merits of the speaker. Paul deliberately laid aside his oratorical skill, determined that nothing would obscure the plain word of God which he spoke. The power was in the truth spoken, the message that enters like a seed into the heart of a man and with a life of its own bursts forth in power to halt him in his tracks, to turn him around, to bring his mind into harmony with God and to compel him to "walk in newness of life." Be ye transformed, not transform yourself, but as God renews your mind through the power of His word; BE transformed. "It is God who works in you both to will and to work, for His good pleasure" (Phi. 2:13).

It is this sense of God's power that we must understand if we are to return to anything that resembles the church of Christ in the scriptures. It is the power of the Creator Himself that must go forth in the preaching and teaching if it is to have the proper effect upon the hearer.

On the other side of the battleground are the works of Satan, devoid of truth but abounding in all that appeals to the physical senses. The work of Satan is to deceive, if possible, the very elect. His delusory principle, with which the world in general agrees, is that power lies in what is tangible, observable and measurable by material means. It is size, numbers, wealth, force, dazzling beauty, and whatever satisfies the sensual lust of man. Hence, there are churches deceived by Satan which seek to display God's power in the world through these delusory means. They advertise their size and extol each gathering as gigantic, record-breaking and colossal. What is this but to say that their power lies in their size? They herald to the world that their program features some star of the movie or television industry, or at least a pro football player, or celebrity, someone who may be acclaimed by the world as appealing to its jaded appetites.

The success of such church services depends not upon how the depth of the truth of our God penetrates, but upon how well the actors perform. The people go away, not talking about the great truths from God which have enlightened their understanding and sanctified their hearts and renewed in them a desire for holiness, but they leave discussing the skill or the talent of the performers of the evening. Each week there must be a preview of coming attractions in which the next service is announced as an extra

special one, featuring some “terrific” or “fabulous” person or event. Every Sunday must be some kind of “special day,” not simply the Lord’s Day, a day of worship, where the word of power is permitted to work God’s will, but a day to top the last one in enthusiasm, number of people present or in the amount of money raised. Some will argue that these means get results and are, therefore, justified. Of course, it is true that, in spite of this great display of the world’s forces rather than the power of Christ, some may be converted, but, if so, it is by the power of God’s word and not by the display of the worldly powers that are brought in and if some are converted while the church is majoring on worldly programs, think what might have been accomplished had all the effort been put forth in presenting the riches of God’s word at every opportunity!

The tragedy is that, after years of this kind of “church work,” members still have no understanding of the great purpose of God and cannot teach the great themes of the gospel such as justification, sanctification and redemption. They have no concern for the fact that the Christian is one who is “risen with Christ” and who minds not earthly things, but has his mind set on the things that are above (Col. 3:1–3).

There is yet another type of power that is conspicuous in today’s church, and which detracts from the power of God. This is that great effort being put forth in the churches in the name of democracy or freedom or some other political cause.

The members are urged to write to their congressmen, or senators, to join this group or that in order to save the nation and to improve society. God’s power is seen to lie in the next election or in the number of names on a petition. A great many are using the church for a mere tool as a means of exerting pressure on government. Many patriots boldly claim that we must support the church in order to save our nation and our “way of life.” Think of it! Making Christ’s church, for which He died, the mere means of augmenting and supporting a human organization largely made up of heathen!

In the meantime, the real power belongs to God. It is going forth in an unseen, unheralded way like the seed silently growing in the earth, to free men from Satan’s deception, to open to him the great wisdom and purpose of God, and to draw God’s chosen ones to Him that they might know the truth as it is in Christ, and have an understanding of their destiny with Him in glory.

Leo Tolstoy wrote, “Let any sincere man pass his life in review, and he will perceive that never, not once, has he suffered through practicing the doctrine of Jesus; the chief part of the miseries of his life have proceeded solely from his following, contrary to his inclinations, the spell of the doctrine of the world.” Satan seems to have cast his spell with such skill and deception that all mankind stands in awe at the forces which display themselves before our eyes today. It is no wonder that men’s hearts are failing them for fear, as Jesus predicted. It is no wonder that many are listening for the loudest voice and looking for the biggest force as the means of rescue from the despair that enshrouds the globe. But we do not look to the physical forces of this world for deliverance. God’s voice is not in the wind, the earthquake or the fire, but it is that “still, small voice.” It may be only a whisper or the truth scrawled on a scrap of paper, but if it is God’s truth, it is God’s power.

It is high time that Christians insist that from their pulpits and in their class rooms the truth of God be THE voice and THE power of doing God’s work. The gymnastics, magic, comedy, and showmanship is apropos to the World, but not in the place where people look for the power of God. The power-struggle today is for the mind of man, and

the one and only means of turning that mind to God is by God's word. It is our one invincible weapon, for "power belongs to God."

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