

Our Omnipotent God

Jeremiah 32:17

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July 14-15, 2018

A 747 was halfway across the Atlantic when the captain announced, *“Ladies and Gentlemen, we have lost one of our engines, but we can still reach London with the three we have left. Unfortunately, this will make us one hour late.”*

An hour later the captain made another announcement, *“Sorry, but we lost another engine. No need to worry because we can still make it on two. However, this will make us two hours late.”*

A short while later, the passengers heard the captain’s voice again, *“Guess what folks? We just lost our third engine, but rest assured – we can fly with only one. We’ll now arrive in London three hours late.”*

At this point, one passenger became furious and shouted out, *“For Pete’s sake, if we lose another engine we’ll be up here all night!”*

Like a plane losing power, many of us are running on only one engine as well. While we desire power in our lives, some of us are losing altitude.

We’re in week three of our series called, “Behold Your God.” I trust that you’ve gotten to know Him better as we’ve shined the spotlight on various aspects of His glorious character. Two weeks ago we learned that God is knowable and last weekend we honed in on the holiness of God and saw that a focus on God’s majesty leads to our misery, which causes us to cry out for mercy. After receiving mercy, we’re in the place to live on mission as we share His message.

I make no apologies that this series contains deep doctrinal truths. I’d rather focus on that than on surfacy and syrupy spiritual sentimentality. In an age of feel-good faith and prosperity preaching, we’re called to behold and believe God, in all of His glorious splendor. And we’re charged with teaching these truths to the next generation as parents and grandparents. I came across this quote Friday morning while listening to a podcast: *“Give your children big truths they will grow into rather than light explanations they will grow out of.”*

Today we’re focusing on one of the “omni” attributes of God. These attributes are difficult to fully comprehend because we have nothing to compare them with in

our minds. You and I are limited in space – but God is *omnipresent*. Our knowledge is limited – but God is *omniscient*, or all-knowing. And while we are more aware of our weaknesses – God is *omnipotent*, or all-powerful.

The word omnipotent comes from Latin and refers to the fact that God’s power is infinite and unlimited – He never loses an engine. This attribute is defined by the biblical word, “**Almighty**,” which occurs 345 times in the Bible, and is never used of anyone but God. Listen to the question God asks in Job 40:2: “**Shall a faultfinder contend with the Almighty? He who argues with God, let him answer it.**” Psalm 62:11 says, “**Once God has spoken; twice have I heard this: that power belongs to God.**” And Psalm 115:3 declares, “**Our God is in the heavens; He does all that He pleases.**”

God can do with power anything that power can do because He has the strength to do all He wills to do. He has all the resources and the ability to work His will in every circumstance in the universe. I like how A.W. Tozer puts it: “*God possesses what no creature can: an incomprehensible plenitude of power, a potency that is absolute.*”

And when God exercises His power, He does so effortlessly. It is no more difficult for Him to create a universe than to make a butterfly. Listen to how Isaiah 44:24 captures the truth that God made the world *and* He makes what is in the womb: “**Thus says the LORD, your Redeemer, who formed you from the womb: ‘I am the LORD, who made all things, who alone stretched out the heavens, who spread out the earth by myself.’**”

He has all power over all things at all times and in all ways. Contemplating what God has created helps us appreciate His power, yet God’s power is greater than anything He has ever made.

Stephen Charnock offers this clarification: “*The power of God is that ability and strength whereby He can bring to pass whatsoever He pleases, whatsoever His infinite wisdom may direct, and whatsoever the infinite purity of His will may resolve.*”

Here’s my definition: “*God has both the authority and the ability to accomplish all He intends.*” Or to say it more simply: “*Nothing is too difficult for God.*”

While all this is true, there are at least seven things the Bible says that God *cannot* or *will not* do:

1. He cannot deny Himself – ***“If we are faithless, he remains faithful - for he cannot deny himself.”*** (2 Timothy 2:13)
2. He cannot lie – ***“In hope of eternal life, which God, who never lies, promised before the ages began.”*** (Titus 1:2)
3. He cannot tempt others – ***“Let no one say when he is tempted, ‘I am being tempted by God,’ for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one.”*** (James 1:13)
4. He cannot change His basic nature – ***“God is not man, that he should lie, or a son of man, that he should change his mind.”*** (Numbers 23:19)
5. He cannot become greater than He already is – ***“There is none like you, O LORD; you are great, and your name is great in might.”*** (Jeremiah 10:6)
6. He cannot share His glory with another – ***“I am the LORD; that is my name; my glory I give to no other.”*** (Isaiah 42:8)
7. He cannot alter His eternal plan – ***“My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose.”*** (Isaiah 46:10)

In other words, *God cannot and will not contradict His character.*

Biblical Survey

The doctrine of God’s omnipotence is assumed everywhere in the Bible and the word is used in the King James Version of Revelation 19:6: ***“And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, ‘Alleluia! For the Lord God **Omnipotent** reigneth!’”*** Handel composed his *Hallelujah Chorus* around this verse.

In 1983 I served as a summer missionary in Zimbabwe. At the end of our time, our team took a tour to Victoria Falls. When I got out of the bus, I heard a loud, thunderous noise that seemed to be coming from the sky and the earth at the same time. As I walked closer to the falls, I could barely think. My heart was racing, my head was pounding, and my ears were ringing. It was deafening and breathtaking.

What John experienced was so much greater than that. Job writes of a similar incident in Job 26:12-14: ***“By his **power** he stilled the sea...Behold, these are but the outskirts of his ways, and how small a whisper do we hear of him! But the thunder of his **power** who can understand?”*** We see once again that when considering God’s attributes, we must conclude that He is indescribable and

inscrutable. But that's our challenge – to attempt to understand and experience the thunder of His power!

In Mark 14:62, we find the name Power used of God when Jesus says, “*And you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven.*” As Stephen Charnock says, “*God and power are so inseparable that they are reciprocated.*” Psalm 68:28 reflects my prayer for each of us: “*Summon your power, O God, the power, O God, by which you have worked for us.*”

One of the ways we can understand the power of God is by considering the name El Shaddai. *El* is the word for God and means “*mighty and powerful.*” While there is some difference of opinion about the primary meaning of *Shaddai*, it is often translated as Almighty and refers to a mighty mountain. The root *shad* is also connected to the nurturing relationship a mother has with her infant and signifies one who “*nourishes and satisfies.*” When the two words are put together, *El Shaddai* means the “*The One mighty to nourish and satisfy.*”

Nothing is Too Hard for God

If you have your Bibles, please turn to Jeremiah 32. Let's put the text in context. The prophet Jeremiah, despite his initial reticence, was commissioned by God to proclaim a very unpopular message – that Judah was about to be destroyed by the powerful country of Babylon. People not only ignored his preaching, he was thrown in wells and dungeons.

Beginning in chapter 30, Jeremiah looks beyond the impending judgment to Judah's restoration and redemption. God's people will be conquered and then deported to Babylon – but they will return 70 years later.

When we come to Jeremiah 32, we read that the prophet has been imprisoned again. The king was incensed because Jeremiah was advocating that they surrender to the Babylonians. We see in verse 2 that Nebuchadnezzar and his army were right outside the walls of Jerusalem.

Amazingly, in the midst of all this chaos and uncertainty, God tells Jeremiah to buy some property from his cousin. This didn't make sense because the entire land was about to become desolate and filled with darkness and despair.

Faith often seems foolish, doesn't it? Noah built an ark when there was no water. Abraham went on a journey without a map. Moses left the treasures of Egypt to wander in the desert.

After making everything official and getting the deed notarized, Jeremiah breaks out into prayer and praise in 32:17: ***“Ah, Lord GOD! It is you who have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and by your outstretched arm! Nothing is too hard for you.”*** Jeremiah knew that God was omnipotent. Since He created the heavens and the earth, He can literally do anything. After all, God said, *“Let there be...and there was.”*

Jeremiah then recounts some highlights from history that demonstrated God's omnipotence beginning in verse 20: ***“You have shown signs and wonders in the land of Egypt, and to this day in Israel and among all mankind, and have made a name for yourself, as at this day.”***

Not surprisingly, Jeremiah then begins to lose some altitude as doubts creep in about what he just did. But in verse 27, God deals with his doubts rather dramatically: ***“Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh. Is anything too hard for me?”***

With great kindness, God urges Jeremiah to greater faith by taking up the prophet's own statement in verse 17: ***“Nothing is too hard for you”*** and turns it into a personal question, *“Jeremiah, do you really believe what you have just said? Is anything too hard for me?”*

“God did this for me when Marie Guyton, our office assistant, knowing I was dealing with a difficult situation earlier in the week, handed me a small rock and just smiled. And then I remembered that I had given these rocks out to everyone when I candidated here over five years ago. I preached on David and Goliath and the rocks were to remind us that *when we focus on giants, we stumble but when we focus on God, our giants tumble*. As I held this rock in my hand, I was prompted to ask if I really believe what God has said.

When God told Sarah, a senior citizen, that she would give birth to a son, she busted out into laughter. To which God said to Abraham in Genesis 18:13-14, ***“Why did Sarah laugh and say, ‘Shall I indeed bear a child, now that I am old?’ Is anything too hard for the LORD?”***

After Jesus explained the cost of following Him and how hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God, He made this statement in Luke 18:27: “**What is impossible with man is possible with God.**” And the last thing the angel Gabriel said to Mary after telling her that she would conceive and give birth to a son, was this: “**For nothing will be impossible with God.**” (Luke 1:37)

Putting Power Into Practice

It’s time for each of us to face the same question: “*Is anything too hard for God?*” Let’s boil this down to where we live. Most of us can easily admit that God is all-powerful. Our problem is more like Jeremiah’s: “*Do we really believe it?*”

I’ve been pondering this quote from A.W. Tozer: “*Anything God has ever done, He can do now. Anything God has ever done anywhere, He can do here. Anything God has ever done for anyone, He can do for you.*”

Now that we know a bit more about God’s omnipotence, let’s consider four ways we can put His power into practice.

1. You can grow in godliness. Far too many of us have settled for a mediocre Christian life. We’ve fooled ourselves into thinking that we can never change. We say things like, “*That’s just how I am. I just have a bad temper. I can’t help myself. Take me or leave me.*”

That’s not the way God intends for us to live. Listen to Paul’s prayer in Ephesians 1:18-21: “**Having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come.**”

Three terms that are used to describe God’s power are found in this passage. The first is translated “**power,**” and is the Greek word from which we get *dynamo*. The second word translated “**working**” means, *vigor*. God is strong and vigorous. And “**great might**” has the idea of *absolute authority*. The same power that raised Christ from the dead is ours today! God’s power is available to open our hearts, restore our hope and to grow us in holiness.

2 Timothy 1:7 says “**God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control**” and one translation of 2 Peter 1:3 reminds us that “**His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and goodness.**” It is abnormal not to experience and tap into God’s power on a daily basis. Conversely, it is abnormal to not access His power.

Here’s the good news. We don’t have to be strong to get this power. In fact, we need to be weak. The Apostle Paul learned this in 2 Corinthians 12:9: “**But he said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.**”

2. You can trust God in trying times. While we have everything we need to grow in godliness, life is filled with troubles and trials. Here are some questions: *Do you access this power in your marriage, or do you believe that it can’t get any better? Are you trusting God’s power with your singleness? Are you convinced that your kids will never change? Do you assume that your parents will never understand you? Have you lost hope that your finances will ever stabilize? Do you need to trust our omnipotent God with a physical problem?*

Nahum 1:7 says: “**The LORD is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble...**” Here’s what I wrote down after contemplating all this: *When you’re through, God can get you through!* With a God who is all-powerful, all things are possible. There is no circumstance, no attitude, and no person outside of God’s power. Remember, you don’t need to have great faith in God, but rather faith in a great God who is omnipotent.

This also has application to us as a church family. As I look at our renovation and expansion plans, I’ve been praying that this will be a time of growth for us – that God would grow our faith individually, that He would grow our faith corporately as a family of believers and that He would grow our future.

A group of Edgewood leaders were texting back and forth on Wednesday as we prepared for the Rock Island Zoning Board meeting. Here’s what I added to the discussion, “*Praying for God’s peace and provision. He is Jehovah Shalom and Jehovah Jireh.*” A couple minutes later, after reflecting on the omnipotence of God, I added this: “*And El Shaddai is all-powerful.*”

While the hearing don't go the way we were expecting, it went the way our Omnipotent God intended. Here's part of the summary you can find in the bulletin: *"A couple neighbors who, like us, want what's best for the neighborhood, expressed concern over our retention system's ability to handle the additional rain water created by our proposed addition. The board voted to table the decision until next month so Public Works could gather additional data on our retention system and the neighborhood storm water system and then share that information with the board to help them make a more informed decision...The next zoning meeting will be on Wednesday, August 8th."*

As I consider this delay and the cost of our project, I keep coming back to the question: *"Is anything too hard for God?"* As you consider the personal problems you are facing, ask yourself this question: *"Is anything too hard for God?"*

3. You have what you need to live on mission. Let's remember the mighty power that is available to us as we share the gospel with those who do not yet know Christ. Acts 1:8 says, ***"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."***

We are witnesses, who have been infused with Holy Spirit power, for the task of communicating the gospel among our neighbors and the nations.

Have you been accessing this power in your life? Have you been mixing it up with non-Christians for the express purpose of sharing Christ with them? Or, like me, do you sometimes think that some people are too hard and too set in their ways to come to Christ?

I received a message this week from Robin, a new Edgewood member. This is what she said: *"The verse you posted today [from Isaiah 26 - **"You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you. Trust in the Lord forever, for the Lord God is an everlasting rock."**] helped me witness to my unbelieving boss."* I learned later that this manager had put her on final written notice a year ago. She added, *"This shows the power of prayer and forgiveness."*

Are you living on mission? Don't underestimate the power of a personal invite in the process of someone coming to Christ. I was encouraged by the results of our recent congregational survey. Of the 548 people who completed the survey, nearly 350 of you (over 60%) indicated that you're at Edgewood because someone invited you.

4. God’s power can save you from your sins. I can remember when I was a teenager my buddies and I got hold of some firecrackers. We were having a blast (pun intended). We put them inside bottles to see what would happen and even experimented with an unfortunate frog. The more we lit off, the more daring we became. I’ll never forget what happened. I was holding an M-80 in my hand; with my arm cocked ready to throw it after my friend lit it. Unfortunately for me, it was a windy day and when he held the lighter up to the wick, it started burning right next to the M-80 and it exploded in my hand. My ears rang for hours, and I couldn’t feel my fingers for a while.

In Romans 1:16, Paul states: ***“For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes...”*** This word *power* is from the Greek *dunamis*, from which we get the word, dynamite. The Gospel is the dynamite of God. It can blow away sin and bad habits and addictions. It can knock off hard edges and provide healing from deep hurts and hangups. It can burst through a hard heart.

This is what we are celebrating at our Celebrate Recovery Anniversary Celebration at Schwiebert Park on August 4. I am praying many more will experience the life-changing power of redemption and recovery.

Listen. You can’t really experience the power of God until you first respond to the power of the gospel. You do not have the power to change yourself – and the good news is that you don’t have to clean up your act before coming to Christ. Put your faith in Christ and He’ll unleash His cleansing power in your life.

I would be remiss to not remind you of how God’s power is also exhibited through His righteous judgment. Jesus demonstrated this when He declared in Matthew 25:41: ***“Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.”***

If you are not yet saved, you should tremble before a holy and all-powerful God. Ecclesiastes 8:8 tells us we are powerless over the day of our death: ***“No man has power to retain the spirit, or power over the day of death.”*** Hebrews 9:27 says, ***“And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment.”***

In his famous sermon called, *“Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God,”* Jonathan Edwards said this: *“Unconverted men walk over the pit of hell on a rotten*

covering...the reason why they are not fallen already and do not fall now is only that God's appointed time is not come."

The entire world watched and waited with baited breath to see if the Thai soccer team and their coach were going to be rescued from deep inside a cave. One British reporter made this statement before the team was rescued: *"These stories speak to a hope that out of gloom, a quiet unassuming stranger will emerge, someone who actually knows what they are doing, someone who will rescue us from the darkness."*

Thankfully, all the boys and their coach have been rescued.

One Christian writer offered this insight: *"On a far greater level, another unassuming stranger emerged from the gloom of our world over 2000 years ago, who knew what he was doing, in order to rescue us from a much greater spiritual darkness. Just like these boys, humanity is in a hopeless and helpless situation unable to save ourselves. We need to totally rely on the direction and ability of another. These boys not only had no diving experience, some of them couldn't even swim. They had to totally put themselves in the hands of another if there was any chance of them getting out and being rescued."*

Likewise, we can do nothing to save ourselves. Once we understand our dire predicament we must trust His power and plan. We must repent and receive Jesus Christ by faith, surrendering ourselves completely to Him.

When the boys were initially found it was thought they might be able to wait out the rainy season and walk out on their own. But while their own walking steps got them trapped, their own work was not going to get them out. Time was limited. Waiting in hope was a false hope. An urgent rescue plan had to be completed.

I have some really good news. The rescuer has come! But if you want to be rescued you must trust Him alone. If you have not been saved, trust Christ right now. Allow the light of the world to save you from the darkness of sin and the domain of Satan. Put yourself in the hands of the Omnipotent One, who will never lose power or altitude.

Charles Spurgeon once said, *"every conversion is a display of omnipotence."* If you're ready to be converted and have God's power unleashed in your life, pray with me.

Invitation

Closing Song – “God is Able”

Commissioning of Puerto Rico Team

Benediction from Ephesians 3:16-21:

*“That according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with **power** through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have **strength** to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the **power at work within us**, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.”*