God is... Powerful

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Preacher: Paul Levy

[0:00] Let me just commend to you Table Talk. For the next few months, we've been given a load of these free magazines that will help you in reading the Bible.! There's articles on daily Bible reading notes.

It's a really excellent magazine with good articles. It'll get you into reading the Bible. There's loads of them on the way out. And please do take one. A deity has been clearly perceived.
You can't miss it, he says. You look out at the world and you see that God is, and what is God like? He is powerful.
There's nothing more obvious about God than his eternal power. It's what you expect of God, isn't it? It's what we expect God to be.
I think when we study what the Scriptures teach about God, there's lots that we find that's unexpected. There's much about God as we read the Bible that is startling and surprising.
[1:05] There's much about God that's beyond what we would have expected. Think of the fact that God is a God of grace.

That he does not treat you as you deserve. He is full of mercy. But he gives to you what you don't deserve. Think of the fact that God is a God of love.
He's a God of forgiveness towards us. None of us could demand, could we, to God that he should love us, that he should forgive us.
And yet he does in Christ. If we began to understand just something of what we're like, the sinfulness, the Bible would call it, of our own hearts, how could we ever have anticipated that God would love us in the way that he does?
How could we ever have anticipated that God would be kind to us? Would be merciful to us?
[2:07] That God would woo us? That God would call us again and again to himself? That God would be patient?

How could we have ever figured out that God should take pleasure in our responding love? There are many things about God that are surprising.
There's so much of God that is beyond what we could ever expect of him. But God's power, well, that's a different story, isn't it? It's precisely what we would expect God to be.
If he's God at all, if he's worthy of the name, we would anticipate that God is mighty and powerful. He is almighty God. Who wants a God that's not almighty?
He must be almighty if he is truly God. And so the unqualified testimony of the Bible is that the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the God of our salvation, is an all-powerful God.
[3:15] And that's to put it really at its very simplest. What does the Bible mean when it says that God is all-powerful and mighty? What does that mean according to the Bible?

What does it mean that God is powerful, firstly? Two things, really. Firstly, that there is nothing that God cannot do. Our children sing, my God is so great, so strong and so mighty, there's nothing my God cannot do.
But there's one thing, isn't there, children, that God cannot do? What's the one thing God cannot do? Sin. God can do all things, but he cannot sin.
God cannot do wrong. It's intrinsically true of God, isn't it? That he is totally incapable of sin or any shadow of wrong. It's an utter contradiction of who he is to think of God as being able to do wrong.
But with that marked exception, there is nothing that God cannot do. He created the whole of the universe out of nothing.
[4:26] Every part of it's being, every aspect of it's functioning, God made out of nothing. And in this sense, he is all-powerful.

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So the first words of the Bible are, in the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form, and void and darkness was over the face of the deep.
And the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. And God said, let there be light. And there was light. And so that's the first sense of the power of God that the Bible speaks of.
It's this cataclysmic, explosive creativity of the power of God. It's like when Jesus stood up on that boat with the terrified disciples in the middle of the storm.
And he says, peace, be still. And the wind stops and the waves die down. It is the cataclysmic, explosive creativity of the power of God.
[5:28] There is nothing, sin accepted, which God cannot do. The word for that in the New Testament is the word from which we get dynamite.

It's got that sense about it. Of course, in the New Testament, dynamite hadn't been invented. It didn't come until the 1860s. But that is where the word for dynamite came from, dunamis.
It is this cataclysmic, explosive creativity of the power of God. That's the first sense. But secondly, the fact that God is all-powerful means that God is the source of all power that exists in the universe.
And there is no such thing as power invested in any place in God's universe that God is not the source of. All power, all authority derives from God.
The psalmist proclaims in Psalm 62, Once God has spoken, twice I've heard this, that power belongs to God. It's the word for authority.
[6:36] All authority in the universe finds its source in God. It all flows from God.

And there is no authority in God's universe which does not flow in the first place from God. The psalmist rightly tells Israel and us to ascribe, to give power to God, whose majesty over Israel and his power is in the skies, Psalm 34, 8.
All power emanates from God. Power belongs to the Lord. The apostle Paul writes to the Roman Christians. The Roman Christians, who you remember, they lived under a very oppressive government.
They're probably at this point, when Romans is written, on the brink of severe persecution. And Paul says to them, let every person, every single one of you, be subject to the governing authorities.
Subject to the governing authorities. To the wicked Roman governing authorities. Be subject to them. Why?
[7:51] What's Paul's reasoning? Paul is saying to the Christians in Rome, be subject to the authorities. Obey them wherever you can. Be respectful.

Be submissive to the ruling authorities. And his reasoning is quite simple, isn't it? I mean, he says, for there is no authority except from God. And those that exist, those authorities, have been instituted by God.
Some of you really don't like that, do you? You really don't like that. You were sure it wasn't there. But Paul's really clear, isn't it?
He speaks to the Romans with this oppressive, really difficult Roman government. And he says, be subject to them. And don't you think it's a startling for me to insist that there's no authority except from God.
When all around us we see, don't we, gross misuse of power and authority in nation after nation in the world. And in the smaller sphere in which we live out our daily lives.
[8:57] Isn't it startling to think this morning that there is no authority apart from God. And when we see such mishandling of authority, it can be so tempting, isn't it, to think, well, no, I cannot be subject to them.

But scripture is really clear, be subject to the authorities, because the authority that's been put over you is from God. And you think, well, that is startling, but actually there's something far more startling.
There is not one iota of authority which the devil wields, which Satan wields. He does not have any authority apart from which has been given to him by the permission of God.
There's no misuse of authority in all the universe, which is like the misuse of authority that the devil has and does. No one misuses the authority they've been given with greater intent than Satan.
But we need to be really clear on this, that Satan's authority is a derived authority, which in the first place is from God.

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[10:19] And his terrible misuse of his authority, as the prince of the power of the air, God will take up and will pick up and will weave into his gracious promises and good purposes.

Martin Luther, the German reformer, he used to call the devil God's monkey, God's chimp. He recognized that he did great, terrible things, and yet God was sovereign.
We thought last week, didn't we, the illustration of a tapestry. So much of life is, we see the tapestry from the back end with all the loose threads and all the jumble of pictures, and yet one day God will turn it round and we will see how he is working all things according to the counsel of his will.
All things according to his gracious promises and good purposes. And God does restrain wonderfully. There's no doubt about that. And God will turn evil for his own ends.
And of course, that is one of the great exciting things about the power of God. He is the created genius. He is the genius par excellence. He turns evil according to his gracious ends.
[11:39] And you say, well, how can you say that? Well, the testimony of the Bible. You go to the cross of Jesus Christ. You see there the greatest evil in history.

The worst thing that a human being has ever done. And God uses the cross of Jesus Christ for his own gracious and wonderful promises. And God's sovereign power will always restrain.
And he will work all things out according to the counsel of his will. So when we speak of God's power, we have these two ideas in mind. We think that God is all powerful. That he is the ultimate creative force in the world, in the universe.
And all creativity, all that is created is made by him. But also we recognize that he is the ultimate authority in the universe. He holds sovereign authority.
Sovereign authority which will be utterly impossible and is utterly impossible to resist. So secondly, where do we see the power of God most clearly?
[12:46] Where do we see the power of God most clearly? What does the power of God look like? Well, the Jews were in no doubt about that. And the people in the Old Testament, they could tell you very easily where the power of God was most clearly seen.

And it was in the Exodus out of Egypt. That celebration, that Passover that they remembered year after year was a remembrance of the power of God in delivering them from bondage and slavery into freedom.
That place where the power of God was made evident in their history, in their great deliverance, out of the bondage of Egypt.
It's really clear in the Old Testament again and again that if you want to see the power of God on display, the Old Testament says, go back to the Exodus. Go to the Exodus' event.
It's why we read from Deuteronomy 4, verse 37. Because he loved your fathers and chose their offspring after them and brought you out of Egypt with his own presence by his great power.
[13:58] Therefore today, and lay it in your heart, know it today, and therefore lay it on your heart that the Lord is God in heaven. Talking of the Exodus, the Psalmist says in Psalm 106, verse 8, he saved them for his namesake that he might make known his mighty power.

There's so much to learn in the Exodus story of what the power of God looks like. There's so many places we could go. The plagues, his dealing with Pharaoh, his opening up of the Red Sea, his killing of the firstborn.
But what I want us to focus on this morning is what called out this unveiling of the power of God in the Exodus story. What is it that lay behind this demonstration of the power of God in the Exodus story?
And it is divine compassion. It was divine compassion on God's part that called out for his power.
And there's nothing so likely to call out a display of God's power as the compassion of God.
Because God loves your fathers, Deuteronomy 4, because God loves your fathers who brought them out by his divine power.
[15:19] So you remember the story, the people of Egypt, they are the slave masters, they are the task masters of God's people, Israel. They treat them appallingly.

They afflict them with heavy burdens. They exploit God's people. And the people of Israel, they groan. And they groan under their bondage.
They cry out for help. And their cry in bondage arose to the Lord. And then the Lord said in Exodus 3, verse 7, I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt.
And I've heard their cry because of their task masters. And I know their sufferings. And I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians.

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And I think that is true in all the scriptures that the primary motivation for the display of God's power is his divine compassion. We see the outworking of God, don't we?
[16:27] The outworking of the power of God in that Exodus story. His patience. His patience. There's something of, I think, the paradox of the power of God as you look at it in the Exodus story.

You see, first of all, this God who is infinitely patient, who comes to Pharaoh again and again and again, let my people go, God's power is wonderfully patient.
And yet his power is also inescapably awful and frightening. And there's both those things that we need to hold in check as we think about God's power.
We see, don't we, the inescapably awful and frightening aspect of God's power that the firstborn child in every Egyptian family is slain.
And yet we see the patience of God that he comes to Pharaoh and the Egyptians again and again and again. In Exodus, there is the absoluteness of the power of God.
[17:35] And ultimately, that power conquers every opposition. It clears every hurdle. So that not even the opposition of the most powerful man in the world at that time, Pharaoh, who owes his very existence to God, not even the existence of the laws of nature as the people cross the Red Sea, as they come out of Egypt, it's the slightest obstacle in the path of the powerful will of God in bringing these people out of Egypt.

And so where do you go to see the power of God? You go to Exodus. You go to see this mighty deliverance. You go to see redemption, power, excellence.
It's the place, isn't it, where the great dynamism that we talked about and the authority of God's power is unleashed and declared. But there's somewhere else we need to go where the power of God is more infinitely declared.
The Exodus is the picture, but when you come into the New Testament, you see the reality because the Apostle Paul says it is in the gospel, the good news of the Lord Jesus Christ that the power of God is most revealed.
Let me read you this verse. Paul says, I am not ashamed of the gospel for in it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes.
[19:09] The good news of the Lord Jesus Christ, that announcement, that declaration is God's power to salvation. Do you remember he tells us that the word of the cross, the message of the cross, it is folly, it is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to those of us who this morning trust in the Lord Jesus and rely on that cross, it is the power of God.

It is in the saving events of the gospel, it is in the life and death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ that the power of God is most evident. And immediately as we begin to think upon the gospel, as we begin to consider the gospel, there is a flood of light upon what God's power looks like.
And so point three, what does God's power look like in the gospel and for us? And it is startling.
Again, I want to say to you that the ground of God's unspeakable display of his power is in his compassion, is in God's compassion, in God's merciful love towards men and women and boys and girls like us.
It is love that is behind the demonstration of God's power to save his people. It is love that demonstrates, that motivates this splendid display of divine power.
Oh, the love that drew salvation's plan. Oh, the grace that brought it down to man. Oh, the mighty gulf that God did span as Calvary. It was love that motivated Christ's acts of might and power and mercy.
[21:06] It was love that motivated him as he powerfully healed the sick, as he fed the hungry, as he gave sight to the blind.

It was love that led him to the cross. God shows his love for us in this, that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.
And that is glorious and that is startling. that which best motivates the unleashing of all the dynamic and all the authority of the power of God, what motivates that is love.
Pure, gentle love is what most easily produces a display of divine power. love. Now think about that because I think that judges us a little bit in many of the ways we think.
When we think about evangelism, for example, when we think about people coming to know the Lord Jesus Christ, it is love which most easily produces the display of divine power.

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[22:26] our motivation should be love. When we think about how to grow in the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, how do people come to maturity?

It is pure, gentle, kind, love that produces the unleashing of God's power. In our wanting to see this country turn back from many of its madness and the evil of our land, how our politicians are proposing laws which are diametrically opposed to the gospel, what is it that unleashes the power of God?
Us getting angry, fighting, being coarse? No, it is love which unleashes the power of God. and we must remind ourselves again and again that love is what produces the unleashing of God's power.
I find it really easy to be pretty angry. I find it very easy to get very frustrated. You want me to moan about healing counsel?
I can wax lyrical for hours, all right? The problems of our society don't start me on the mosque. But we are called to love because it is love which unleashes God's power.
[23:59] It's ultimately fundamental to know that, isn't it? So the conversion therapy bill that is coming down the tracks that we're going to need to engage with, we're going to need to engage again with our government and with politics, it's a horrible, horrible, dangerous bill.

And yet, what must motivate us in engaging with our politicians and engaging with our government is love, both love for God and love for the lost. And we forget that at its peril, love is the great apologetic.
If you're a visitor, what do we want you to see? What do we want you to know? We want you to know the love of God in Christ Jesus. And so that's the first thing about the power of God in the gospel, that it is best motivated by love.
The second startling thing, I'm going to call, and it's not a great point, and this is the hiddenness. The hiddenness and the mystery of the power of God.
The hiddenness and the mystery of the power of God because in the gospel, what do we see? We see that the power of God is so gentle. The power of God is not bludgeoning.
[25:14] The power of God is not bullying. And you might really have to adjust your natural thinking at this point. I think in the world, I think in the way that people think, they think that power equals kind of might is right.

The power often indicates something noisy, something loud, something inescapably obvious, something that crushes people. powerful. You can't not notice the powerful.
And that's how we tend to think, don't we, about the acts of power. But the truth of the gospel of the Lord Jesus and the gospels as you read them is that you certainly can not notice the power of God. You certainly can not notice God's almighty divine power. power. And if you don't get this straight in your thinking, your whole Christian life, your whole Christian expectations, your whole Christian hope are going to be constantly frustrated.
God's power is not like a noisy gong or a clashing, clanging symbol. God's power is something that you can easily not notice.
[26:36] The greatest display in all of creation of God's power is in the gospel. I am not ashamed of the gospel for it is the power of God to salvation.

Let me take you to a shed in a back garden in the middle of the night. it's a shelter.
It's not really a stable. It hasn't got sides on it. It's in a little town called Bethlehem. And in that shed there is a feeding trough where animals have been feeding maybe earlier that day.
And in that trough is laid a little newborn baby in cloths. and that little baby is the power of God.
The startling thing around those events that we'll celebrate soon are not the choirs of heavenly angels singing on the hillside.
[27:50] The startling thing is the silence of that baby. and that hardly anybody realizes who that baby is.

And there's an old man, an old priest at the temple and there's an old woman, a widow who's been hanging around that temple for decades and they get who the baby is. But hardly anyone else knows what is going on at all.
And yet in that little baby the power of God is being unleashed like it has never been unleashed before. How silently, how silently the wondrous gift is given as God imparts to human hearts the blessings of his heaven.
Believe me, you can easily not notice the power of God. And it may look so, so different from what we expected the power of God to look like. And I think, again, this calls into question many of our

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preconceived ideas about what does a powerful Christian life look like.
God says, my power is made perfect in weakness. And we who long to know him, we who long to know God and we long to know the power of his resurrection, we may need again this morning to remind ourselves that Jesus Christ was crucified in weakness, but he lives in power.
[29:29] The great display of divine power in all the universe, and the gospel display reveals that divine power, it's most dramatically displayed, not by angels singing, not by noise and events, but via Bethlehem, for your life lived in obscurity, for your life of sorrow and sufferings, and via Calvary.

And there's the world of difference, isn't there, between human forcefulness and divine power.
Divine power came to earth in him who would not put out a smoking wick.
divine power came to earth in a man who would not break a bruised reed, wouldn't snap a blade of grass, who is breathtakingly!
gentle. God's power was seen in weakness. God's power is seen in a woman dying two days after a diagnosis.
He was able to say, I don't want to go to heaven, I don't want to go into hospital, I want to go to heaven. It is in that weakness that the power of God is seen.
[31:13] And lastly, as I finish, where do we see the wonder of God's power? I want you to understand that the gospel unleashes God's power in our salvation.

salvation. The gospel unleashes God's power in our salvation. That's not a very good point either.
God's power is not something far removed from us if we're in Christ this morning.
God's power is something which has happened in the hearts of those of us who are united to the Lord Jesus by faith. God's love.
When Paul is fishing around for a metaphor to describe what has happened to those of us who've become Christians, what's happened to you if you're a man or a woman or a boy or a girl who is trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ and you're relying on him alone for salvation.
And Paul is fishing around for a metaphor and he cannot do better than use the metaphor of creation. And he says if any man, any woman, any boy or girl is in Christ, he is a new creation.
[32:32] So do you remember the two aspects of the power of God we thought of? Both of them are true of you if you're in Christ. What has God done in your heart?

It's power in the sense of dynamite. God has broken into your life. You were dead in trespasses and sins and God has made you alive in Christ.
You were in the dark and God has come and switched the light on. And he has brought the light of the gospel to bear in your spirit. And God has created in you spiritual light and life out of nothing.
power. Cataclysmic power. It's like dynamite. But it's also power in the sense of authority.
For what God has done in your heart, no man, no woman can ever undo. We come to the climax in Romans 8. I hope you'll come back tonight.
[33:41] In Romans 8 where Paul says, A skeptic asked me recently if I believed that I was saved forever.

And when I said, yeah, I do believe that because of what the Lord Jesus Christ has done, he said, that is so arrogant. He's pretty cross.
But actually it's not arrogance. It's not arrogance because it's a tiny mustard seed grain of faith that's been planted in God, in the power of God, who has all authority.
And he has done a work that neither man nor devil nor authority can oppose. And he who by his almighty power raised Jesus Christ from death to life, it's that same power that has been at work in you in raising you from death to life.
And he has put into your heart the indestructible life of Jesus Christ. Our salvation unto life, our hope is in the power of God.
[35:11] God and glory rem pulling word without end. Amen. Let's pray. Amen. Let's pray. David Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray.

Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray.

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