

TRUTH

“. . . Your word is truth” (John 17:17)

January 2024

THE POWER OF GOD

Throughout the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation, we read about God’s power. The Psalmist declared to the Lord, “*We will sing and praise Your power*” (Psalm 21:13). Yes, we will do that over and over!

Jesus said that in His day, some people did not know the power of God (Mark 12:24). The same is true of some individuals living today. How tragic. Let us consider together some truths about God’s power which are revealed in the Bible.

The power of God is **unlimited**. The Bible calls the Creator “Almighty” (2 Corinthians 6:18). The Greek word “παντοκράτωρ/pantokratōr” means “He who holds sway over all; ruler of all; almighty” [Thayer, word no. 3841 via e-Sword]. Used ten times in the New Testament, that Greek word is translated into English as “Almighty” in nine cases and as “Omnipotent” once (in Revelation 19:16).

The Lord God is above every so-called god. He said He executed judgment against “*all the gods of Egypt*” when He delivered Israel out of bondage in Egypt (Exodus 12:12). By exercising His power, the Lord showed that the so-called gods of the world could do nothing to hinder or stop His action. Let us never doubt the power of Jehovah!

God’s power is **unchanging**. He was Almighty when He created the universe in six days (Exodus 20:11), and He remains Almighty in the new covenant era, too (Revelation 4:8). With the passing of time, our physical bodies lose some aspects of their power. So do some mechanical devices. Not God. His power can never increase or decrease. Why not? If He could be more powerful tomorrow than He is today, that would mean He is not all-powerful today. But, He is! At the same time, if His power could *decrease* from what it is right now, then He would become a being that is not all-powerful. Those changes could never happen. Hear what God said about Himself: “*I do not change*” (Malachi 3:6).

If people criticize God, do not believe in His power, or refuse to listen to instructions He gives us in the Bible, none of those failures on man’s part change the reality that the Lord is Almighty, and that will never change! If the world is in a mess, let us not fall into the trap of blaming God or doubting His power.

God has **demonstrated** His power in a variety of ways. He showed His power when He spoke the world into existence out of nothing (Genesis 1:1,3). What are some other ways that God has manifested His power? He communicates with humans (Hebrews 1:1,2). He parted the waters of the Red Sea (Exodus 14) and delivered Israel out of Egypt (Deuteronomy 5:15). He raised up rulers like Cyrus (Ezra 1:1-4) and Nebuchadnezzar (Jeremiah 25:9) to carry out His will.

During His life on earth, Jesus fed great multitudes (John 6), walked on the sea (John 6), and raised the dead (John 11). The Christ and preaching His cross both are called “*the power of God*” (1 Corinthians 1:18,24). The Bible also speaks of “*the power of His resurrection*” (Philippians 3:10): He left behind an empty tomb when He rose from the dead!

God answers prayers, as when He healed Hezekiah of his sickness and added fifteen years to his life (2 Kings 20:1-11). The Lord also fulfilled Paul’s desire to go to Rome (Romans 15:30-32; Acts 28:16).

The message of the gospel is God’s power to salvation (Romans 1:16), and when people obey the gospel, He washes away their sins (Acts 22:16). His gospel has the power to change people’s thinking, their conduct, and their eternal destiny.

By His power, God opens doors (2 Corinthians 2:12). It is a great blessing that He also heals and comforts weary hearts (2 Corinthians 7:5-7).

It may surprise some to learn that, though God is all-powerful, He **does not always employ all of His power**. The Lord has never pledged that He will use all of His power in every single instance. He made Adam from the dust of the earth (Genesis 2:7). He no longer makes humans in that way. For forty years, He gave Israel manna from heaven (Exodus 16:4,35). He does not do that today. There are no genuine miracles taking place today. Why not? We do not need them, because He has given us His complete truth. God’s power has not diminished one iota, but in some aspects He has changed His manner of operation.

How should we respond to God’s amazing power? “*Let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him*” (Psalm 33:8). Let us praise Him and serve Him!

-- Roger D. Campbell

TAKEAWAYS FROM EXODUS 1-2

The second book in the Pentateuch opens with the children of Israel multiplying and increasing in power in *Egypt*. It closes with them erecting a tabernacle at *Mount Sinai* in compliance with God's instructions.

This book is called "Exodus" because it records the historical truth that, after serving as slaves for hundreds of years in Egypt, the Israelites "*went out from the land of Egypt*" (Exodus 12:41). This second book of Moses shows the development of Israel, the "great nation" which God promised He would make from Abraham (Genesis 12:2).

In this article, we are starting a twelve-part series in which we will point out some of the takeaways/lessons we find in the book of Exodus. We commence with some observations on the first two chapters.

1:8 – "*Now there arose a new king over Egypt, who did not know Joseph.*" This statement provides the reason behind the change in conditions for the children of Israel in Egypt. At one point, the Egyptians acknowledged to Joseph that he helped save their lives (Genesis 47:25). As a result of Joseph's role in Egypt, when he was still alive the relationship between the Israelites and Egyptians was quite good. With a new king on the throne, matters would deteriorate rapidly. A reminder: When things are going well for us or our nation, let us not take such a blessing for granted, as there is no guarantee that things will always be that way.

1:9-14 – Why the Israelites became slaves – On one hand, the Israelites' bondage in Egypt was a fulfillment of God's prediction. As the Lord spoke to Abraham about giving the land of Canaan to the patriarch's descendants, He told him that first they would be strangers in a land that was not theirs, be servants there, and be afflicted for hundreds of years (Genesis 15:13). The king of Egypt forced the children of Israel to become slaves when he saw how powerful and populated they were. He was concerned that if they joined Egypt's enemies to fight against Egypt, Pharaoh and his people would be in trouble. Yet, the more Egypt afflicted the Israelites, ". . . *the more they multiplied and grew . . . So the Egyptians made the children of Israel serve with rigor. And made their lives bitter with hard bondage*" (1:12-14). Reminder: Those who mistreat God's people will not be held guiltless by Him.

1:15-17 – Hebrew midwives refused to act against the will of God. Pharaoh commanded the midwives to kill the newborn Israelite males. What was their response? "*But the midwives feared God, and did not do as the king of Egypt commanded them . . .*" (1:17). As a result of their brave choice, the Lord blessed the

midwives. Reminder: When human decrees contradict what God wants us to do, we must remain loyal to Him, regardless of the consequences (Acts 5:29).

2:1-10 – Here comes Moses! – Moses, who was born during the time of Israel's bondage in Egypt, was from the tribe of Levi (2:1) His parents later are identified as Amram and Jochebed (6:20). By His providence, the Lord raised up Moses at this time, and he was blessed to live with Pharaoh's daughter and be educated in the wisdom of the Egyptians (Acts 7:22).

Moses, whose name in Hebrew meant one who is drawn out of the water (Exodus 2:10), left Egypt at the age of forty. He would be gone for forty years. He fled from Egypt to Midian, where he met and married Zipporah (2:11-22). To that union were born two sons, Gershom and Eliezer (18:3,4). Reminder: Though Moses may not have understood why all of these things were happening in his life, Jehovah was using all of Moses' life experiences to prepare him for his most important role and challenge, which was to lead Israel out of Egypt when he was eighty years of age and guide them toward the land of Canaan.

2:23-25 – God remembered His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. That took place when the children of Israel groaned due to their harsh bondage and cried out to the Lord. To say that He "remembered" them does not imply that He somehow had forgotten them. Rather, He "remembered" them in the sense that He was at that time ready to put into action His plan to bring Israel out of Egypt. He had promised the Israelites' three forefathers that one day their offspring would dwell in Canaan. To fulfill that promise, Jehovah first had to get His people out of Egypt. Reminder: The Lord operates according to His flawless wisdom, and He always acts on His own time schedule. His promises never fail . . . Never!

The first two chapters of this marvelous book set the stage for all that is to follow. They tell us of Israel's slavery in Egypt, introduce us to the one whom God handpicked to deliver them, and let us know that God is ready to keep His agreement with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Stay tuned . . . Amazing things will be recorded in this treasure-filled book!

-- Roger D. Campbell

The Plan for our 2024 TRUTH Articles

Page 1 – The _____ of God

Page 2 – The Book of Exodus

Page 3, Column 1 – Things to Overcome

Page 3, Column 2 – Q & A

Page 4 – Parables of Jesus

Overcoming Jealousy/Envy

The Christian life is all about being “*a new creation*” (2 Corinthians 5:17). Christians are to put away old habits and ways and replace them with godly ones (Ephesians 4:21-24). One challenge of Christian living is that of overcoming jealousy and envy.

What are jealousy and envy? The root word for “jealousy” in the Koine Greek language was a word used in both good and bad ways (depending on its context). For example, the Bible says, “*It is good to be zealous in a good thing always*” (Galatians 4:18), but the same root word is used negatively in Romans 13:13 and other places. The usage/sense is simple to determine, based on the context. The Greek word for envy, though, is **always** used in a negative way. This article deals only with the *negative* usage of jealousy.

How is jealousy to be distinguished from envy? Jealousy is when one sees what another has and desires that same thing for oneself. Again, this could be a good thing, as in seeing a spiritually-mature person and desiring such for oneself. Envy, however, seeks to deprive another of what he/she has in order to obtain such for oneself. Envy feels displeasure at another’s success or prosperity. The two concepts are similar in many ways, but they are, in fact, distinct.

What are some characteristics of envy and wicked jealousy? First, they always seek to hide their true motives. To crucify Jesus, the Jewish leaders hid behind feigned loyalty to God and the Law of Moses (John 19:7). As Paul points out in 2 Corinthians 11:13-15, such behavior mimics Satan himself. Second, most often the object(s) of envy have themselves done no harm to those who envy them (see 1 Peter 2:19-24). Third, envy and jealousy wreck lives (both the envious/jealous one and his target)—emotionally, physically, and, worst of all, spiritually. “*Envy is rottenness to the bones*” (Proverbs 14:30)!

How does one overcome jealousy and envy? Since “*love does not envy*” (1 Corinthians 13:4), having more love for God and others is key. Also, heed Proverbs 4:23 – “*Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life.*” In other words, better thinking helps overcome jealousy and envy (see also Philippians 4:8). And having the “mind of Christ” puts others before self and thus prevents jealousy and envy (Philippians 2:3-5).

Overcoming jealousy and envy is not always easy, but it can be done when we love others, guard our thoughts, and have the mind of Christ. The key to doing so is found in Psalms 119:11: “*Your word I have hidden in my heart, That I might not sin against You!*”

-- Chad Dollahite

In what sense is the new covenant “better” than the old law?

Throughout the book of Hebrews, the Holy Spirit shows various contrasts between the old covenant/Law of Moses and the new covenant/testament of Jesus. In doing so, He describes the old law as “the first” or “first covenant” and the law of the Christ as “the second.” For instance, in Hebrews 10:9, we read, “*He takes away the first that He may establish the second.*”

It is a fact that the new covenant is better. God said so: “*But now He (Jesus) has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises*” (Hebrews 8:6). What are some ways in which the new covenant is better than the old law?

A better mediator – As a mediator between God and men, Jesus is a better mediator than Moses was for Israel (Hebrews 12:24; 8:6; 3:1-6; Galatians 3:19).

A better high priest – The Israelite high priests under the old law were men with flaws. Some of them were downright wicked. In contrast to them, Jesus, our only High Priest, was “*without sin*” (Hebrews 4:15). Yes, He was “*holy, harmless, undefiled*” (7:26).

A better sacrifice – Under the old system, what took place? The priests stood “*daily and offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins*” (Hebrews 10:11). And the Christ? He “*offered one sacrifice for sins forever*” (10:12) . . . “*for this He did once for all when He offered up Himself*” (7:27). His single sacrifice got the job done!

Better promises – The Bible affirms that through Jesus we possess “better promises” (8:6). In Him, we have the promise of eternal life (1 John 2:25; 5:11), coupled with God’s new-covenant pledge, “. . . *and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more*” (8:12). That stands in contrast to the arrangement under the old law in which there was “*a reminder of sins every year*” (10:3) when, despite the sacrifices for sin which were offered day after day, a goat was offered annually on the Day of Atonement.

Better rest – The Israelites who left Egypt and journeyed in the wilderness looked forward to the rest that awaited them in the land of Canaan (3:16-19). In contrast to that *earthly* rest which they sought, under the new covenant we look forward to a heavenly, eternal rest (4:1,11; 1 Peter 1:3,4).

Full truth and grace – Those who lived under the old law had access to God’s truth and grace, but via Jesus and His new covenant we have “*all truth*” (John 16:13) and the fullness of His grace (John 1:16,17), by which we have all spiritual blessings (Ephesians 1:3).

-- Roger D. Campbell

THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER

There are some well-known parables that Jesus spoke. Some of the better-known ones are the Good Samaritan, the Prodigal Son, and the focus of this study, the Sower. The Parable of the Sower is a good place to begin a study of the parables, as it introduces parables in Jesus' teaching.

This parable is found in three of the gospel accounts – Matthew 13, Mark 4, and Luke 8. Only Luke mentions a parable before the Sower and it is a conversation with a Pharisee, Simon, who invited Jesus into his home (Luke 7:36-50).

Jesus had been teaching for some time and began to face difficulties of opposition and rejection from the Jewish religious leaders. Because of this, Jesus changed His manner of teaching, speaking to them in parables (Matthew 13:3,34,35). Jesus' disciples wanted to know why He was telling perplexing parables. Why would You speak in this fashion when teaching multitudes of people? Why not make things easier to understand? Why not speak in ways that are simpler and clearer? Jesus' answer, essentially, is that He is challenging dull hearts. The people's hearts are dull, ears are closed, and eyes are shut. So, Jesus is speaking in this way to see who will come to Him to learn. How many will be confused and dismiss Him? How many will be drawn to Him and seek to learn further? (Matthew 13:10-15). This is crucial to understand the explanation Jesus gives to His disciples about the Parable of the Sower.

Jesus frequently used agricultural language to express spiritual truths — seeds, weeds, trees, etc. Perhaps this is one of the most well-known parables because Jesus provides the interpretation of it. We are not left wondering about the meaning of the seed and the sower. It is a foundational parable. In Mark's account, Jesus asks "*Do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand all the parables?*" (Mark 4:13).

As with many of the parables, it can be read with different points of view. One can hear it with an emphasis on the sower, the seed, or the soil. It should be noted that in Matthew 13:18, Jesus refers to it as "*the parable of the sower.*"

In many of the parables, there is a peculiar element that is meant to leave one wondering about the thing that seems out of place. Consider the sower for a moment. In farming, much time and effort are spent preparing the soil. If it is someone's job to sow seed, they would be expected to plow the ground, feed the soil with fertilizer, kill out any infestation of weeds,

etc. In order to produce a healthy crop, there must be a wise and responsible preparation for sowing.

In this parable, however, the sower of seeds casts it "*by the wayside,*" "*on stony places,*" "*among thorns,*" and "*on good ground*" (Matthew 13:4,5,7,8). It seems that the sower is aimlessly throwing seed around him. This does not seem like a skilled farmer making a living from the fruit of the land.

In many studies of this parable, there is a great deal of effort put into breaking down the different types of soil and applying this understanding to each of us as hearers of the truth. How will I receive what the gospel offers?

It seems to me that the point of the parable lies upon the one sowing the seed. The sower needs to understand that every person is an individual, has free will, and will respond out of their own heart. It is not the job or place of the sower to prejudge the heart of everyone they meet. It is not the work of the sower to save lost souls — that is accomplished by God, through the blood of Jesus. The task of the sower is to sow; to throw the seed everywhere, to everyone.

Understanding the different responses that people will have can help us to not become discouraged and give up our work of sowing. It is likely that we have thought unfairly about someone, that we have deemed them as undesiring, perhaps even unworthy of the gospel message — only to see them receive it with a contrite heart and render the obedience of faith to which they are called. And how many times have we wrung our hands over one who seems to be the "right fit" because they continue to refuse the salvation of Christ? Jesus knew what was in the hearts of men (John 2:25). We, however, do not. We are left to observe what one does (Matthew 7:15-20).

Our work is to sow and see what happens. That is how the farmer of this parable approaches his work. The explanation Jesus gives identifies the seed as the word of God (Luke 8:11). From several centuries earlier, we read of the effective nature of the word of God — when it goes out, it accomplishes God's purpose (Isaiah 55:11). Our job is not to strategically locate good soil, but to broadcast the seed over as much area as possible, giving souls the opportunity to obey!

-- Dave Leonard

[Unless stated otherwise, all quotes in all articles of *TRUTH* come from the New King James Version; ©1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.]

TRUTH is published each month in order to help educate, edify, encourage, and equip the saints of God.