

A Power above all Powers

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Preacher: Malcolm Macdonald

[0 : 00] We're going to read now from the Psalm, Psalm 8.

Singing will be in Gaelic. You can read the verses in English. How excellent in all the earth, Lord, O Lord, is thy name, who hast thy glory far advanced above the starry frame.

From infants and from sucklings' mouth thou didst strength ordain, for thy forced cause that so thou mightst thee avenging for is train. When I look up into the heavens which thine own fingers framed, and to the moon and to the stars which were by thee ordained, then say I, what is man that he remembered is by thee?

Or what the son of man that thou so kind to him shouldst be? For thou a little lower hast him than the angels made. With glory and with dignity thou crown it hast his head.

Thy hands works thou maest him, Lord, all under sweetest it lay. All sheep and oxen, he and beasts that in the field do stray. Fowls of the air, fish of the sea, all that pass through the same.

[1 : 17] How excellent in all the earth, Lord, O Lord, is thy name. Yehovah Yeh kemur hatana, earthhya gathuluhir.

Yehovah Yeh kemur. Yehovah Yeh kemur.

Yehovah Yeh kemur. Yehovah Yeh kemur.

Yehovah Yeh kemur. Yehovah Yeh kemur.

Yehovah Yeh kemur. The End The End

[3 : 10] The End The End The End

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[11 : 09] The End The End The End

The End The End He speaks of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. He speaks of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. He speaks of the ascension of Jesus Christ.

It is a supernatural power.

He is a■■■■■ slides, it is a devi■■■ in judgment andachten and has determined that his team, what we should say, as he said, and as a hipp think about how God created the world and the great power that it required in order for him to do that and you can understand how that would be something that that we can easily follow this is what Carson says I think of God designing each star and upholding the universe by his powerful word I think of the pleasure he takes in the woodpecker with a specially built tail feathers that enables it to speak with such force I marvel at a God who creates amuse and chieftain and the duckbill platypus his power extends beyond the limit of our imagination now you see where he goes with that when you begin to think of creation you're not just thinking well God created the world in the in the world in the space of six days and all very good and then what did he create he created heaven he created the earth he created the the stars the moon the sun he created the planet that you call earth and everything that occupies it and the more you allow your thoughts to and Don Carson goes that you know he he is clearly a very learned man and he talks about the sciences and the the way the the the atoms atoms work within the world in which we live and how they exist and coexist in order for our society within this world of ours to work as it is and clearly when we think of God's power that is some place that we can easily go and follow but Paul is not in the business of measuring power as such at this point when you follow his logic through the chapter here he's not in he's not in in any way creating a league table for us that we can say well Paul's God's power at this point was at the highest sense of his of the force of his power or pointing to another thing that he was willing to follow which we can do force of his power or pointing to another thing or some other thing other than that.

[19 : 59] That's not his purpose. His purpose is to describe to us not so much the nature of the power but the source of the power and that what we experience is attributable to the exercise of that power.

And when it comes to salvation we are recipients of the power of God as he has already identified there by making us alive, quickening us, making us able to believe what we were incapable of believing until he so did.

When he writes his epistle to the Corinthians and we can get to chapter 15 he's talking about the resurrection of the saints and he there describes to us the resurrection of Christ and he tells us about that Christ. He rose from the dead according to the scripture and he wants us to understand that the power of God is in exercise in different ways, in different tiers where we are able to see the God of providence, the God of creation, the God of salvation executing his power in all of these ways. The scripture spoke about Christ rising from the dead.

Just one example, the Gospel of Mark and we read there how the church was entitled to be aware of the forthcoming event that would entail the birth and the death of Jesus Christ because the scripture spoke of it.

In chapter 10 Mark we read, Behold we go up to Jerusalem and the Son of Man shall be delivered unto the chief priests and unto the scribes and they shall condemn him to death and shall deliver him to the Gentiles and they shall mock him and shall scourge him and shall spit upon him and shall kill him and the third day he shall rise again.

[22 : 32] So the church had the ability to know about the resurrection as something that God had foreordained as something that was an inevitable step in the experience of Jesus Christ and yet there is no evidence to suggest to us that even words such as such words as are explicitly declaring to us and interpreting the scripture that spoke of the resurrection of Christ that the disciples understood the significance of what was being said.

The power of God was something they knew all about as far as the level of their understanding went. The scripture declared the power of God at all kinds of levels and yet the great mystery that awaited to unfold was the mystery of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead and it was down to the power of God and without God's help they could not foresee the fulfilment of that.

There was no earthly explanation but God had declared that he would do this and it is because he can do this that he can quicken those who are dead in trespasses and sin remember he is tying these things together in this passage he begins with God's power and exercise towards the sinner in bringing them to life his power and exercise towards the sinner in sustaining and maintaining that life and tying it in to the power that was in exercise to quicken the dead body of Jesus Christ as he lay in the grave so the resurrection is something that he wants us to understand its significance cannot be divorced from the power of God as it is to be revealed and experienced.

The second thing that we have here is he wrought in Christ Jesus this power when he raised him from the dead and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places there's two things in that one statement there's the ascension of Jesus Christ and the session of Jesus Christ what we are told is that Christ was to sit at the right hand of God and that it was God himself who gave him that place God allowed him to sit at his right hand God gave him this place at his right hand when we read of the ascension account as we have it in the book of Acts it is explicitly stated for us there how Jesus Christ left this world and ascended to the right hand of God in chapter 1 of the book of Acts and while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as he went up behold two men stood by them in white apparel which also said ye men of Galilee why stand ye gazing up into heaven this same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go up into heaven these words tell us several things

God not only was instrumental in the resurrection of Christ he is also instrumental in the ascension of Christ and the session of Christ and he is telling us that this Christ that they are seeing is no phantom he is no ghost he is the same Christ that they saw before their eyes in their time in his fellowship in his company this same Christ physically ascended not his spirit not his soul but what we understand to be the person of the Lord Jesus Christ and God sat him at his right hand many of the divines tell us that that has to be understood not literally but in the sense in which God is not a physical being he is not made up of flesh and bone he is spirit and yet

[27 : 47] Christ is described as sitting at his right hand that is merely descriptive of the place of honour that God the Father was given to him Jesus the Son appears in glory given a place that only God could give him by reason of his finished work we need to remember that there was a sense in which when Christ was in heaven the glory that belonged to God was his just as surely as God the Father was all glorious and God the Spirit was all glorious so God the Son was all glorious but now when he came into the world and he took upon himself our human nature he did so with an express purpose in mind to be the redeemer of his people had he failed in that mission in that task that glory that God the Father gave to him would not be his speaking with all humility concerning what he was doing had he not fulfilled all righteousness had he not died the death of his people on the cross he would not have been given the place of honour at the right hand of the majesty on high

Paul speaks of this again in his epistle to the Philippians I think it's chapter 2 he tells us there that God has also highly exalted him and given him a name which is above every name that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow of things in heaven and things in earth and things under the earth and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father when he was in the world man refused him that glory man did all in their power so that that glory would be kept out of sight but now his work is done and as a priest that is the high priest of God he sits down at the right hand of God indicating by his session that the work that was entrusted to him is complete and God exalts him so that's the next thing that we have here that Paul draws our attention to his resurrection his ascension and his session all important phases of who Christ is and what he has done then we are told far above all principality and power and might and dominion and every name that is named not only in this world but also in that which is to come for Jesus is exalted by the Father not just by giving him the place of honour at his right hand but by revealing to us that the place that he occupies is a place that places him above all who are in the world without exception be they of this world or the spiritual realm

Christ is exalted above them some think that Paul is thinking here in particular of the angels and there were occasions in his writing where he was writing to people who had an improper view of angels and in the scheme of salvation and that he might have had them in view at this point so that people would not be deceived into angel worship instead of the worship of the only begotten son of God but the reality is that Christ by virtue of God's exaltation to his right hand and the declaration of the implications of that exaltation Christ is set before us as the one who is over all whoever it is and in your Bibles

I think you'll notice that in these verses you'll find that there are some words which are in italics all things that are to the church there the word things is in italics saying that it's not in the original it's just put there to make the sense of it more clear to the reader Charles Hodge says that Christ is not only exalted above all creatures he has dominion over them that is that word power again used in a specific way Christ has dominion over them he has the last word with regard to them all are placed in absolute subjection to him they are under his feet we read we heard sung the words of Psalm 8 a Psalm which speaks of Christ and this in particular that God would give to him the glory that belongs to the saviour of our fallen world where all his enemies and all our enemies if we are his are placed under his feet he has been given authority by virtue of his work it is overall this must be stated and restated because if you don't remember it then you are more inclined to lose sight of the implications of it for yourself he has well you remember how the gospels finish he gives to the church the great commission he sends them out with the gospel and he gives them a directive with regard to that gospel to preach it to every creature but he says as he does so all power all authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth so those that I send go not just at my say so but with the authority that is mine as

God has given it to me and if we remember that when it comes to the propagation of the gospel we are encouraged that wherever it is preached in his name that his authority is an authority that embraces all there is no higher authority that you need to go to you know there are times in history where the corrupt Roman church saw emissaries of the pope going out and executing decisions and laws in the name of the papal authority you saw kings in various generations and they were corrupt and they executed authority that was vile in the way that they applied it in a despicable and despotic way the authority of Christ is nothing like that it is an authority that is real and genuine and God given and there is nothing that threatens it there is nothing that undermines it you know the psalm that begins

[36 : 36] I think some of the commentators are of the opinion that Paul's words here owe much to the psalm psalm 110 where we find the words at the beginning of the psalm the Lord has said unto my Lord sit thou at my right hand until I make thine enemies thy food stole that Paul is there clearly thinking about the words of the psalmist there applying them to the authority and power of Christ as he has it to apply freely and without threat upon this world the evangel of the church can be optimistic if it is carried out in his name it can be nothing other than certain of a prosperous future if it is depending upon him and what he is able to do

John MacArthur the American theologian writes ultimately your strength or your evangelistic strength whatever it may be whether it is in discipleship or the proclamation of the gospel all your efforts will bear fruit because they are backed by the authority of none other than Christ himself and if that's the beginning point of any evangelistic strategy we have as a congregation or as a church we are sure of certain success because we are not doing it in our own name we are doing it in his we are doing it with his power at our disposal and that's the final thing we have here the church his church he tells us he has put all things under his feet and gave him to be the head over all things to the church which is his body the fullness of him that filleth all in all he gave him to be head over all things to the church which is his body you can read that very quickly you can read it without really delving into the burden of what lies at the heart of it the fullness of him that filleth all in all that's a very very deep statement the fullness of him that filleth all things and theologians have had a debate over the meaning of these words but the important thing for us is this to remember this is his church he is its head he has authority over his church he has a very peculiar and specific interest in that church a relationship that he has that he has with them a headless body is anathema a head without a body is anathema doesn't make a lot of sense he has authority over them for them don don caution again one final quotation from him not a drop of rain can fall outside the orb of Jesus sovereignty all our days our health our illnesses our joys our victories our tears our prayers and the answers to our prayers fall within the sweep of the sovereignty of one who wears a human face a thorn shadowed face all of

God's sovereignty is mediated through one who was crucified on my behalf and the chapter finishes with this very I would hope very encouraging note that this relationship with Christ is all important it's important to him it's important to us who are his people there are complications as I said in meaning of these last few words which is his body the fullness of him that filleth all in all there are three possibilities as far as theologians are concerned about the interpretation of these words the church is the body of Christ the fullness of God who fills all in all is one particular slant the church and the body of

Christ and the fullness of God who fills all in all the second meaning the fullness is the church and the third meaning is not too different from that the church is that which Christ fills and the language doesn't allow us to disregard any of these meanings but Christ is the one in whom all fullness dwells we are told and God himself is the source of his fullness as such and Paul's burden is to to remind us that this all important relationship that exists between his people and himself allows us to access that fullness draw from it derive strength from it be empowered through it and be encouraged by reason of its existence

God's power is without end God's people are also without end they are they are empowered by him to exist with him for all eternity it's a great mystery surrounding the eternity upon which their faces set but that is something that the scripture discloses in part but it all hinges on this the Christ who has all the glory as the hymn writer put it Emmanuel's land to him be the praise and the honour that we can bestow upon him in this world and in the next let us pray Lord God we give thanks that such a one as Christ Jesus the Lord is before us even as we speak he is at your right hand and he knows our weaknesses and he knows our shortcomings our every distraction our every lack and our every intent and desire to be filled and fulfilled may we be directed to him that in his fullness that we would find contentment and that we would constantly look to him to fill us and to go on filling us through the spirit that he has left in this world in order to do that very thing bless your people remember them in our own community here bless them body and soul remember them in all their difficulties and their trials and temptations watch over those who are indifferent and negligent and wavered and backward we pray that you would bless your word to us that you would lift up Christ before us that the eyes of our understanding would be opened that we would be able to see him there are so many who find fault with your people find fault with your word find fault with you as our

[45 : 43] God help us to remember that we were once with him in our thinking and in our thoughts cleanse us from all these sins we pray direct us to one who is able to bring life where it is yet to appear pour out your spirit upon us and make us ever mindful of our need of Christ in our lives as we live it here in this world go before us now now may grace mercy and peace from God Father Son and Holy Spirit be with you all now and always amen