

## GOD'S POWER – OMNIPOTENCE

In the summer of 1876, grasshoppers nearly destroyed the crops in Minnesota. So in the spring of 1877, farmers were worried. They believed that the dreadful plague would once again visit them and again destroy the rich wheat crop, bringing ruin to thousands of people. The situation was so serious that Governor John S. Pillsbury proclaimed April 26 as a day of prayer and fasting. He urged every man, woman and child to ask God to prevent the terrible scourge. On that April day all schools, shops, stores and offices were closed. There was a reverent, quite hush over all the state.

The next day dawned bright and clear. Temperature soared to what they ordinary were in midsummer, which was very unusual for April. Minnesotans were devastated as they discovered billions of grasshopper larvae wiggling to life. For 3 days the unusual heat persisted, and the larvae hatched. It appeared that it wouldn't be long before they started feeding and destroying the wheat crop. On the fourth day, however the temperature suddenly dropped, and that night frost, covered the entire state. Result - it killed every one of those creeping, crawling pests as surely as if poison or fire had been used. It went down in the history of Minnesota as the day God answered the prayers of the people. That is an awesome story! But understand, it was NOT the first and certainly was NOT the last time that Almighty God answered the prayers of his people.

Jeremiah 32:17 Ah, Sovereign LORD, you have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and outstretched arm. Nothing is too hard for you.

Do you believe that? Do you believe that God can do anything? Do you really believe that there is nothing that is too difficult for God?

2 Kings 13:14 Now Elisha was suffering from the illness from which he died. Jehoash king of Israel went down to see him and wept over him. "My father! My father!" he cried. "The chariots and horsemen of Israel!" 15 Elisha said, "Get a bow and some arrows," and he did so. 16 "Take the bow in your hands," he said to the king of Israel. When he had taken it, Elisha put his hands on the king's hands. 17 "Open the east window," he said, and he opened it. "Shoot!" Elisha said, and he shot. "The LORD's arrow of victory, the arrow of victory over Aram!" Elisha declared. "You will completely destroy the Arameans at Aphek." 18 Then he said, "Take the arrows," and the king took them. Elisha told him, "Strike the ground." He struck it three times and stopped. 19 The man of God was angry with him and said, "You should have struck the ground five or six times; then you would have defeated Aram and completely destroyed it. But now you will defeat it only three times."

Today we are continuing in our series Getting to Know God. Two weeks ago we looked at God's Omniscience – God knows all things. Last week we talked about God's Omnipresence – that God is everywhere. Today we look at God's Omnipotence – God is all powerful. Again, these three attributes always work in tandem: God knows what needs to be done. God is always wherever He needs to be in order to do whatever needs to be done and God has the power to do it.

After Elijah confronted the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel he ran for his life and found himself in Horeb alone and exhausted. In the midst of Elijah's depression God said that 3 things would occur – First, that Elijah would get an assistant in the form of Elisha. Second, that Israel's king Ahab (a very bad king) would be completely destroyed by Jehu his commander. Third, that Hazael would become the next King of Aram (Syria).

All these things had taken place. Elisha had taken over from Elijah. Jehu had destroyed the house of Ahab and now his grandson Jehoash was the king of Israel. Hazael had killed Ben-Hadad and was the king of Aram. Now Aram was a constant trouble to the Northern Kingdom of Israel. Both Jehu and Jehoahaz had been defeated by Aram and now Israel's military was almost completely destroyed. Only 50 horses, 10 chariots and a few thousand soldiers remained (2 Kings 13:7) to fight the many thousand soldiers of Hazael's army. The situation was desperate and it seemed that Aram would surely destroy Jehoash and Israel. In the midst of this darkness comes an unusual encounter:

1. Admit your Need (vs. 14)

The king was upset over the illness of Elisha because it represented the last of God's power which was Israel's last hope. Jehoash says to Elisha "My father! My father! The chariots and horsemen of Israel!" These were the same words Elisha said to Elijah when he was taken by God. Whatever the meaning it is clear that Elisha is close to death and that the king recognizes that Elisha is a channel of the Lord's power. With no successor, it was unclear who would be the next prophet to take Elisha's place.

The first step to dealing with issues in your life is to recognize your need and go to the one who has the power to help you. In order to live the Christian life we must have the power of God working in us. So often we have a need and go to everyone but God for help. Seek the Lord because real change in your life requires real power from on high.

In 1715, Louis 14th of France died. Louis, also known as "Louis the Great," had the longest reign of any French King – 72 years. His court was the most magnificent in all of Europe, and his funeral was spectacular. His body lay in a gold coffin in Notre Dame cathedral in Paris. To dramatize the deceased King's greatness, orders had been given for the cathedral to be dimly lighted, with only one special candle set above his coffin. Thousands waited in hushed silence. Then Bishop Massillon began to speak. Slowly reaching down, he snuffed out the candle, saying "only God is great."

John 5:2 Now there is in Jerusalem near the Sheep Gate a pool, which in Aramaic is called Bethesda and which is surrounded by five covered colonnades. 3 Here a great number of disabled people used to lie--the blind, the lame, the paralyzed. 4 5 One who was there had been an invalid for thirty-eight years. 6 When Jesus saw him lying there and learned that he had been in this condition for a long time, he asked him, "Do you want to get well?" 7 "Sir," the invalid replied, "I have no one to help me into the pool when the water is stirred. While I am trying to get in, someone else goes down ahead of me." 8 Then Jesus said to him, "Get up! Pick up your mat and walk." 9 At once the man was cured; he picked up his mat and walked.

This man believed what he had been told – that if by some magical way the water was stirred and you were the first to get in then you would be healed. He spent all his time and energy chasing after that dream. He did not recognize that Jesus was the only way to be healed.

Paul understood this truth. He wrote in 2 Corinthians 12:9-10 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 about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. 10 That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

In the years 1014-1035 there ruled over England a Danish king named Canute. King Canute tired of hearing his retainers flatter him with extravagant praises of his greatness, power and invincibility. He ordered his chair to be set down on the seashore, where he commanded the waves not to come in and wet him. No matter how forcefully he ordered the tide not to come in, however, his order was not obeyed. Soon the waves lapped around his chair. One historian tells us that, therefore, he never wore his crown again, but hung it on a statue of the crucified Christ. You first admit your need, but then...

## 2. Believe in Faith (vs. 15-17a)

Elisha told the king to get a bow and some arrows and then when he had taken it, Elisha put his hands on the king's hands. Who was better able to shoot an arrow - the strong young King of Israel or an old dying prophet? I am surprised that the king didn't just say to Elisha "leave me alone - I can do it myself". Often we think that the answer to our own problems lies within our own strength. It often does not. We need to follow God's directions. (e.g. Setting up Petra's Doll house) Go to the one who can help and do what He says.

Matt. 11:29 Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.

When we are yoked with Jesus 2 things happen. First, our steps are guided. When we are yoked together with Jesus He guides our steps and leads us in the way in which we should go.

One morning a couple of cowboys went out on the range to bring in a wild steer from the mountains. They took along with them one of those shaggy little gray donkeys -- a burro. Now a big three-year old steer that's been running loose in the timber is a tough customer to handle. Nevertheless, these cowboys had a technique for handling this steer. They got a rope on the steer and then they tied him neck and neck, right up close, to the burro and let them go. At first, the burro had a bad time. The steer threw him all over the place. He banged him against trees, rocks, into bushes. Time after time they both went down. But there was one great difference between the burro and the steer. The burro had an idea. He wanted to go home. And no matter how often the steer threw him every time the burro got to his feet he took a step nearer the corral. This went on and on. After about a week, the burro showed up at the corral. He had with him the tamest and sorriest-looking steer you ever saw.

Second, our burdens are lifted. When we are yoked together with Jesus he carries the weight for us. We need to trust in the power of God and not in our own strength in times of difficulty.

In a seminary missions class, Herbert Jackson told how, as a new missionary, he was assigned a car that would not start without a push. After pondering his problem, he devised a plan. He went to the school near his home, got permission to take some children out of class, and had them push his car off. As he made his rounds, he would either park on a hill or leave the engine running. He used this ingenious procedure for two years. Finally a new missionary came to that station. When Jackson proudly began to explain his arrangement for getting the car started, the new man began looking under the hood and interrupted, "Why, Dr. Jackson, I believe the only trouble is this loose cable." He gave the cable a twist, stepped into the car, pushed the switch, and to Jackson's astonishment, the engine roared to life. For two years needless trouble had become routine. The power was there all the time. Only a loose connection kept Jackson from putting that power to work.

### 3. Speak in Faith (vs. 17b)

After shooting the arrow Elisha declared “The LORD's arrow of victory, the arrow of victory over Aram! You will completely destroy the Arameans at Aphek.” He spoke God’s will into the situation.

Part of believing in faith is speaking in faith. I am often amazed at the words that people speak about themselves and their situations. The words we speak come from our mind – and they also influence our mind. The more you say something, the more you believe that it is true.

### 4. Act in Faith (vs. 18-19)

The answer to the King’s problem was not in the hands of Elisha, but in the hands of the King. The response of the king determined the answer to the king’s problem. The King was told to strike the ground with the arrows, and he did 3 times but then stopped.

The way the king responded showed the king’s heart. The arrow which was given the King was an arrow of victory. We too have been given the victory in Jesus. We have the power and authority to move out and destroy the enemy. However, far too often we do not use the power we are given. You may be saying - “I want to grow in my relationship with the Lord this year”. Good, do it! God has done His part, it’s time for you to do yours.

You have many arrows of victory in your quiver today. God has given you many opportunities to grow and mature in your faith as well as many opportunities of places to serve.

Henry Blackaby - the author of “Experiencing God” writes: “We should attempt things so great that they are doomed to failure unless God intervenes.”

"When we depend upon organizations, we get what organizations can do; when we depend upon education, we get what education can do; when we depend upon man, we get what man can do; but when we depend on prayer, we get what God can do." A.C. Dixon

Each of us has been given a limited number of years on this earth. We need to make the most of our time.

Psalm 90:12 Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.

A few years ago People Magazine published an article entitled "Dead Ahead" telling about a new clock that keeps track of how much time you have left to live. It calculates an average life using a variety of different factors. You program your sex and age into the clock and then from that it will tell you how much time you have left to live. It sold for \$99.95. It is an intriguing idea. In fact, that’s what the Psalmist told us to do:

Alfred Nobel was a Swedish chemist who made his fortune by inventing dynamite and other powerful explosive materials. Those materials, purchased by major governments around the world, were used to produce weapons of destruction. When Nobel's brother died, one newspaper printed Alfred's obituary by mistake. In it, Nobel was described as a man who became rich by enabling other people to kill each other in unprecedented numbers.

When someone sent a copy to him, Alfred Nobel was so shaken by the assessment of his life that he resolved to use the fortune he had amassed to reward accomplishments that benefited humanity rather than destroy it. He established what we now know as “the Nobel Peace Prize.”

Alfred Nobel had a rare opportunity. He was given the chance to see an evaluation of his life while he was still alive and able to change it. I sometimes wonder what each of us would do if we could have that same opportunity. What kind of epitaph would be on our gravestones if it were written today? And if we were given a chance to change things, to rewrite the obituary, how effective would we be at making changes?

Use your life to make a difference. Plug into the power of God and be a vehicle for His glory. It is not in our own strength but through God’s strength that the world will be transformed.

Dr. William Leslie was born in 1868 in London Ontario. He went to school to become a pharmacist. When he was 20 years old he moved to the Chicago area, where God began to grip his heart with the desire to become a medical missionary. He joined American Baptist Missionary Union and moved to the Congo service in 1893. He faced many trials and faced serious illness. A young missionary named Clara Hill took care of him until he recovered. Their friendship ripened into love and they were married in 1896. In 1912 they decided to leave the comfort of the mission station and travel inland to do a pioneered a work in a remote village called Vanga on the Kwilu River with the Yansi people. Many of the surrounding villages were still practicing cannibalism at the time.

William and Clara set up a school. They would travel to the surrounding villages telling Bible stories and teaching the children how to read and write. They saw very few come to Christ. After 17 years they returned to the USA, feeling like failures and believing that their work had born very little fruit. Just 9 years after they returned he died.

In 2010, a team of missionaries with Mission Aviation Fellowship did a survey trip into the interior of the Congo. They flew into the area and then hiked and took canoes deep into the jungle until they came to the first of the Yansi villages. They were amazed at what they found. In every village they found a network of reproducing churches throughout the jungle. Each village had its own gospel choir that wrote their own songs and would have sing-offs from village to village. They found a church in every village they visited scattered across 34 miles. One such church was a 1000-seat “cathedral” that was packed. So many villagers walked miles to attend.