

Power Belongs To God (Part 1)

The Handwriting Is On The Wall

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We are going to begin this sermon by turning to Daniel 5:4-6. The setting is Belshazzar's great feast that he made.

Daniel 5:4-6 They drank wine, and praised the gods of gold, and of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone. In the same hour came forth fingers of a man's hand, and wrote over against the candlestick upon the plaster of the wall of the king's palace: and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote. Then the king's countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another.

For the past eight years I have begun each Feast of Tabernacles with a message titled "The Handwriting On The Wall." This feast is no different. The term has become a cliché in Israelite cultures, instructing us, that in retrospect, after an event has concluded with bad results, that we should have known better. We should have seen the bad results coming. We should have seen the warning signs and taken different steps to provide a more positive solution.

However, the intention of this sermon is somewhat different from those previous ones. Each previous "Handwriting" sermon involved significant news events that signal that we indeed are in the time of the end.

Significant news events are continuing to take place, and we are certainly further along the road to Christ's return than we were at this same time last year. In a sense, this sermon is no different from the previous ones, and thus there is a sense of urgency. We must pay attention to that so we are not caught unprepared for what follows as each day moves us closer to Christ's return.

This sermon material is much more directly aimed at us to a *spiritual* end. In fact, it is aimed *directly* at us. It is tied to the larger issue of God's sovereignty, and especially to the quality of our relationship with Him. He is, after all, the unseen power that is directing events to the conclusion that He wills, and these conclusions *will* come to pass. His goal is a certainty.

Because we are directly related to Him by means of His Spirit, we are thus directly involved in this message. We are not merely interested bystanders in what is going on. We are not just standing around looking at something curious that is occurring, but I warn you that the quality of our life is involved in this subject.

I am beginning a series which is going to carry all the way through the Feast of Tabernacles, and hopefully each sermon will link to the previous one and add things to it. This particular sermon is designed to lay a foundation for reinforcing a single major factor that we must take into account in order to make the very best use of the remaining time. The subject that I have put on it is, "power belongs to God." It is not that our God is powerful. Power **belongs** to Him. There is a difference there.

We must know, and know that we know, that we believe, and that we comprehend this fact in a practical way and use it all the time in order to make the best possible use of God's merciful warnings.

A firm conviction in God's ever-present power can give one the right perspective to the solution needed to not just merely *endure* the times, but to use the times to grow, to overcome, to witness for God in the very best way.

Philippians 4:12 I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.

I mentioned at the beginning of the announcements about how all of us have suffered things at the beginning of the Feast of Tabernacles. Some people lost their money. Some people lost their way. Some people lost the room they thought they were going to get, or they got a room they did not bargain for, that it was not quite up to snuff. I mean that all kinds of things can happen.

Do you think that the apostle Paul did not go through things like that? He most certainly did. That is what he just told you there in Philippians 4. He knew how to be full, he knew how to be hungry, and he knew how to abound, and he also knew how to suffer need. In verse 13 he said:

Philippians 4:13 I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me.

Be aware, be warned, and be exhorted, that if you have any desire to overcome faults, if

you sincerely desire to be in God's Kingdom, and if you desire to be like God and to glorify Him, you need to protect your relationship with God, because He is the source of the power to "do all things," and not just merely *endure* to the end.

Paul is saying here that he knows how to discipline himself, and to thus keep on track in every circumstance of life. But let us understand, by this time in Paul's life he had the necessary skills required to make the best of every situation. It is the foundation of these qualities *developed* in Paul that I am aiming at in this "Handwriting" sermon.

Paul does not mean that he did this alone by means of a merely human discipline and skill that anybody could acquire, but he is instructing us that he was **enabled** because of his faithful relationship with Christ. The real dynamic of this is that it is Christ who has the powers, and it is He who also faithfully enabled Paul. Do you see the reciprocity there? Paul was faithful. Christ was faithful. The two of them together worked to give Paul the discipline of mind and whatever power was needed for him to overcome in that situation.

You know from reading the things Paul has written, maybe especially in the Corinthian books, that he went through bad things. Humanly we would think that if anybody was that good of a servant of God these things would not happen. Change your mind. Oh yes, they will happen! Is it possible that God lets them happen, and in some cases *makes* them happen to provide a test? He wants to see how we are going to react.

The enablement of Paul's skills to accomplish things that please God was spiritual.

John 15:4-5 Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself except it abide in the vine, no more can you, except you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches: He that abides in me, and I in him, the same brings forth much fruit: for without me you can do nothing.

Jesus Christ is our Mediator. He is the connection between God and us. The spiritual enablement flows from God, through Him, to us. It is God's powers and God's faithfulness that is the handwriting issue of greatest importance to us.

I want you to turn to Psalm 59, because we are going to look at a psalm that David penned at a very difficult time in his life.

Psalm 59:3 For, lo, they lie in wait for my soul [or for my life]: the mighty are gathered against me; not for my transgression, nor for my sin, O LOORD.

David is saying, "I did not do anything to get myself in this predicament. I am innocent, and yet these people are coming after me to murder me."

Psalm 59:8-10 But you, O LORD shall laugh at them; you shall have all the heathen in derision. Because of his strength will I wait upon you: for God is my defense. The God of my mercy shall prevent [My margin has "meet me," that is, "befit for me,]; God shall let me see my desire upon my enemies.

If we would have gone through the whole psalm we would find in verses 8, 9, and 10 that David's confidence is rising. I guess you might say "he caught himself," and did not allow his attitude to slide any further than it might have. But he caught himself, and his confidence is rising because he believed in God's strength. David is saying that God's strength is enough to put down *nations*, let alone a small band of individuals who were coming after him. There is safety in God. He also recalled, at the same time, God's mercy toward those who serve Him.

Psalm 59:16-17 But I will sing of your power; [Now he is talking directly to God.] Yes, I will sing aloud of your mercy in the morning: for you have been my defense and refuge in the day of my trouble. Unto you, O my strength, will I sing: for God is my defense, and the God of my mercy.

I want you to notice the phrase "my strength." He attributes that his strength—the strength of his confidence and the dropping of his fear—was coming from God spiritually to him to buck him up in the face of this terrible situation. David called God "his strength."

Psalm 59:17 Unto you, O my strength, will I sing: for God is my defense, and the God of my mercy.

In these final two verses is a brief summary that provides a strong conclusion in this affirmation of David's faith telling *why* he trusts God. This is mostly concerned with God's power and strength, and so David takes confidence in God's power. It is a combination of God's strength, His power combined with His mercy that David's confidence is in.

We are going to develop this concept a bit further, and we are going to go to Psalm 62.

Psalm 62:1-12 Truly my soul waits upon God: from him comes my salvation. He only is my rock and my salvation; he is my defense; I shall not be greatly moved. How long will you imagine mischief against a man? You shall be slain all of you: as a bowing wall shall you be, and as a tottering fence. They only consult to cast him down from his excellency: They delight in lies: They bless with their mouth, but they curse inwardly. Selah. My soul, wait you only upon God; for my expectation is from him. He only is my rock and my salvation: He is my defense. I shall not be moved. In God is my salvation and my glory: the rock of my strength, and my refuge is in God. Trust in him at all times; you people, pour out your heart before him: God is a refuge for us. Selah. Surely men of low degree are vanity, and men of high degree are a lie: to be laid in the balance, they are altogether lighter than vanity. Trust not in oppression, and become not vain in robbery. If riches increase, set not your heart upon them. God has spoken once; twice have I heard this; that power *belongs* unto God. Also unto you, O Lord, belongs mercy: for you render to every man according to his work.

The overall theme David is instructing us in as to the things he has learned from *his* personal experiences with God as to why we can give God our fullest trust. He is passing this experience on to us.

Now pay attention to these concepts, because trouble on a scale never experienced before is building. I think you will recall in Jeremiah 30:7 it states that we are moving into the time of "Jacob's trouble." It says that there has never been a time like this before. As bad as it was in Noah's time, this is going to be even worse. Terrifying, painful trouble is building from every direction, and there is no place that one can literally run to.

When the Israeli-Hezbollah war broke out in Lebanon, those who were living in the south fled from their home area, and mostly they fled north because the Israeli counter-attacks were coming from the south, and so they had a reasonably safe direction in order to flee. But for people in the future, just over the horizon, there will not be any place to run to unless God supplies one.

I want you to notice in the book of Amos he describes something that was building in his day. It did not happen directly after he said this, but it did happen. Listen to this advice, and listen to the description. Remember that Amos was a Jew. He lived in Judea, and God sent him to the Northern Ten Tribes to be a prophet to them, warning them that they were right on the edge. God was losing patience with them, but He gave them another warning. He is telling them:

Amos 5:15 Hate the evil, and love the good, and establish justice in the gate: It may be that the LOORD God of hosts will be gracious unto the remnant of Joseph.

Is that not interesting that "Joseph" is mentioned there? Here we are, living in Joseph.

Amos 5:16-20 Therefore the LOORD, the God of hosts, the Lord says thus, Wailing shall be in all streets; and they shall say in all the highways, Alas! Alas! And they shall call the husbandman [the farmer] to mourning, and such as are skillful of lamentation to wailing. And in all vineyards shall be wailing: for I will pass through you, says the LOORD. Woe unto you that desire the day of the LOORD! To what end is it for you? The day of the LOORD is darkness, and not light. [Now listen to the description of the trouble.] As if a man did flee from a lion, [That would be bad enough!] and a bear met him; or went into the house, ["I am safe!"] and leaned his hand on the wall, and a serpent bit him. Shall not the day of the LOORD be darkness, and not light? Even very dark, and no brightness in it?

An indication, that for all intents and purposes, it is going to be hopeless. There will be nowhere to run. So, where will **you** turn at a time like this? We might say by the time you are in that, it is too late, and in a way that is the point of this message. Why not take care of the relationship with God before this time shows up, and there will be a place of refuge? Now is the time, brethren, to read the handwriting that is on the wall.

The trouble of which Jeremiah, Amos, and many other prophets spoke, which we will soon be facing, is going to have to be confronted using spiritual resources.

When you are in trouble and you need help, you seek somebody out who is in a position to help because they have more of whatever it takes to help you meet the situation. You need their physical strength, or their wisdom, or their expertise, or their influence, or whatever it is to help you. Their power may simply be that they have more experience in this area than you do.

You may need to contact a lawyer because your problem is legal. Your need may be medical, and so you contact a doctor. You may need an auto mechanic because your car needs to be repaired. Or maybe all it is that you need help with is getting a lid off a jar. That is where husbands come in handy. But what I am getting at here is we are seeking other people's powers very frequently to help us in difficulties that we are

facing.

We are going to go back to Psalm 62. This psalm is instructing us that the Supreme Power in all creation is God, and David begins expressing this fact by saying in verse 1 that "He is our salvation." The word "salvation" more literally means "deliverer"—a deliverer from trouble.

What David is doing from the very beginning of this psalm is implying that when we are in trouble we ought to turn to God first. Get into the habit. I am not talking about something where you just need help getting a lid off a jar. We are talking about things that are more serious than that.

In verse 2 David calls Him "our Rock." He is implying a foundation, a source of stability that keeps us from undirected anxiety, just running all over the place, not knowing what we are doing. Also in verse 2 he says He is our defense, or our defender. God has ways of deflecting attacks that no human being can.

Verses 3 and 4 are directed at David's attackers. They were attempting to undermine his reputation before the public while at the same time seeking ways to assassinate him. He warns them that their lying gossip in their attempts to undermine him will prove to be their undoing—"their lives," he calls them.

In verses 5-7 David turns his attention back to himself, and he begins to buck himself up, resolving to patiently wait upon God as his only trustworthy hope. Also in verse 7 he states that God is "our glory." He is the God in whom we take pride for all that He is. We just read where David called Him "my strength." We are going to see another verse where He is called "my strength." He is One who can give us favor even before those who might otherwise be against us. He makes our enemies even be friendly towards us.

Also in verse 7 He is "our refuge"—meaning an unqualified place of safety in any circumstance. It does not matter what it is.

In verse 8 he appears to be exhorting others—friends, companions, supporters—urging them to pray to God for help, because He is a solid place of refuge in times of trouble.

The Hebrew shows us in this one psalm that five times in this brief 12-verse psalm he exhorts himself, or instructs us, that God is the only sure place of refuge.

Now how is it that God can do all these things? He is our Rock, our Salvation, our Defender, our Refuge, and our Glory, because, as David says quite simply in verse 11,

"Power *belongs* to God." It is right here that we are confronted with a major reason why God is the only One who can be fully relied upon in our time of need. Power is not only something God possesses, but when we come to understand it, ***ALL power belongs to Him!*** All power flows from Him, and He gives it to whomsoever He wills. Let that sink in and meditate on it.

Remember what I said at the beginning. Whatever God wills, happens! Power is God's possession to use in any situation, no matter what it might be, and distributed as He sees fit. Now who, brethren, can fight God or argue that He should not have used it or given it to whom He chose to give it?

He says that sometimes He sets up in nations the basest of men. That power given to those base men to rule came from Him because it suited His purpose. Who has sufficient power to nullify any attempt of God to do anything that He desires to accomplish in His creation? It is His.

Notice that the word "belongs" in Psalm 62 is in italics, meaning that it was added. I do not think that it is wrong, but appropriate. It is written as though He owns it, that it is his to use or distribute as He alone sees fit. Who is going to counsel Him? It begins to open an awesome thought to consideration. As I said before, nobody has power unless God provides it for their use.

Do you know what it says at the beginning of Hebrews? Who is sitting at the controls of the power, who upholds the whole thing by His word of power? Our Savior. Understanding this makes David's exhortation in verses 9 and 10 clearly understandable. David is counseling these people who are against him. "Surely men of low degree are vanity, and men of high degree are a lie: to be laid in the balance, they are altogether lighter than vanity. Trust not in oppression, and become not vain in robbery. If riches increase, set not your heart upon them."

When David says in Psalm 62:11 that "God has spoken once; twice I have heard this," he is using a Hebrew idiom that means in English "I have heard this over and over." It means "repeatedly." In practical application it means that God will always decide the outcome of whatever is in dispute, whatever hangs in the balance. He is sitting in judgment of the whole earth.

We are going to look more closely at the word "power." Some translations will translate that word "strength." Either one is correct. Power is defined in the *Reader's Digest Oxford Complete Word Finder* as: "having the ability to act; influence."

This next definition is really rich. It is from the same dictionary. It says: "A particular faculty of body or mind capability." That definition of power or strength opens a whole other exciting avenue. It takes the meaning of "power" from being nothing more than brute overwhelming force into such areas of power as intellect. Do you think intellect is not a power? Also in areas of wisdom, understanding, vision, logic, energy, eloquence, wealth, authority, privilege, prerogative, control, mastery, persuasion, forgiveness, mercy, and it goes on and on and on.

All of those things, and many more, are encompassed within that word "power" or "strength." Where else are we going to turn to who has this awesome package of powers to use to come to our aid? There is no help like Him anywhere, because power *belongs* to Him. We will see more of this tomorrow. Is there any area of life; is there any need that He is not superior to any source that we might possibly seek out to provide help during our time of need? I am not saying that we should not use human beings, but it would go a lot better if we seek God first, and then use them. So David is suggesting to us that whenever you are in trouble and need help, why not just go right to the top? Why fool around?

In verse 12 David adds yet another quality we very much need to consider. God is not only just, as David states, but He renders to everyone according to his deeds. He will punish, but He is also merciful, for within the context He is the very pinnacle of love. "God *is* love." I think you understand that in the biblical spiritual sense "the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by His Holy Spirit." We do not have that love until He gives it, and then that begins to enable us to keep the commandments the way God intends that they be kept, because that power is distributed to us.

Do you think we need this relationship with God, or what? This entire Psalm 62 is a brief general instruction explaining why we should trust God. It is simply stated, and to those who believe, there is nobody more trustworthy. It is that simple. It does not have to be complicated. There is just nobody more trustworthy. So in a broad way, David is saying that God's power to act in behalf of His purposes is the very foundation of our faith in Him.