

QUANTOCK MINISTRIES

www.quantockministries.org.uk

*A Bible teaching and preaching ministry
for the Christian community*

D M HERRING
45 LUXBOROUGH ROAD
BRIDGWATER
TA6 7JN

01278 451297
qmins@aol.com

GOD'S OMNIPOTENCE – God is all-powerful

The idea of an all-powerful God has been a feature of religious belief since the beginning of time and is especially foundational within Christian theology. The main concern we address in this study is whether for any one of us this belief is just theoretical or is the basis of a living and loving relationship with this eternal and triune Deity.

In the Old Testament a prime example is Job, whose story starts by showing that he was a very religious and careful believer in the sovereignty of God. Following a series of tragedies in his life, family and circumstances, his friends challenged his faith in God. In Job 9 v 1 – 20, for example, we see Job's defence of his strong convictions regarding God being all-powerful, but clearly those beliefs were doing nothing to help him come to terms with his situation. After God's intervention in chapters 38 to 41, Job's apparently theoretical understanding is dramatically deepened into a realisation that God is indeed sovereign, but whose power is always directed towards our personal growth in grace, spiritual blessing, and vital relationship with Himself – Job 42 v 1 - 6.

In the New Testament Paul is making basically the same argument in Athens, the home of perhaps the greatest philosophers the world has known. The thinking that had developed there in the Greek Empire laid the foundation for all the immensely influential philosophical and democratic ideas that have guided a great deal of humanity ever since. In Acts 17 v 22 – 31, Paul points out that their theoretical acceptance of the existence of a supreme deity ("The Unknown God") is in fact the God who has now been revealed (in Jesus) in a very personal way; the God whom we can see, reach out to, and find (v 27).

So we must never look at God's omnipotence as simply causing vindictive and perverse circumstances, but rather as God our heavenly Father teaching us, training us and seeking to bring us closer to Himself in preparation for our eternal relationship with Him. We note that in the Bible there are many statements supporting the doctrine of God's omnipotence, and we look quickly at six examples:

Psalms 115 v 3. Our God is in heaven; he does whatever pleases him.

Jeremiah 32 v 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.

Matthew 19 v 26. Jesus looked at them and said, 'With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.'

Luke 1 v 37 (referring to Mary's virgin pregnancy). Nothing is impossible with God.

Romans 1 v 20. For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities - his eternal power and divine nature - have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.

Ephesians 1 v 19. That you may know ... his incomparably great power for us who believe.

The Bible teaches that this omnipotent power is shown especially in:

1. God's work of creation
2. God's actions in providence
3. God's plan of redemption.

However, we are shown "limits" on God's power which we need to note, as such limits define and enhance the truth and perfection of God's power. Here are six examples of these limits:

Numbers 23 v 19. God is not a man, that he should lie, nor a son of man, that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfil?

1 Samuel 15 v 29. He who is the Glory of Israel does not lie or change his mind; for he is not a man, that he should change his mind.

Matthew 26 v 53 - 54. Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels? But how then would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must happen in this way?

2 Timothy 2 v 13. If we are faithless, he will remain faithful, for he cannot disown himself.

Hebrews 6 v 18. God did this so that, by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled to take hold of the hope offered to us may be greatly encouraged.

James 1 v 13. When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone.

The limiting factors on God's power can be summarised as:

1. God cannot act against His own perfect and faithful nature.
2. God will not overturn the orders of His creation.
3. God's perfect justice recognises the actions and power of our own free will and personal responsibility.

Regarding point 2, we note that Jesus in His temptations refused to turn stones into bread, for minerals and plants are two different orders of creation (Jesus said He always does what the Father does - John 5 v 19). Also, Jeremiah 33 v 25 - 26 indicates that there are the "fixed laws of heaven and earth". Even in the matter of a worldwide flood and complete destruction God has now promised He will not permit that again (Genesis 8 v 21 - 22 and 9 v 9 - 17).

Regarding point 3, a foundational element of humanity's being created in the image of God is that we each have a free will - we are not robots - and this is the ground of our responsibility. God in His eternal foreknowledge knew before the creation of the world exactly what each of us would decide using our free will, and He planned accordingly. This is demonstrated throughout scripture in the reaction of countless individuals to God's grace, and in Genesis 6 v 3 He says quite emphatically that He will not contend with man for ever. Judas Iscariot provides a prime example. The interaction between each person's willingness or refusal to listen to God, repent of evil and accept His redeeming love in Jesus, is the only basis for God's ultimate judgement on their eternal destiny.

In order to arrive at a personal and practical relationship with God's omnipotence an individual human must accept that there are two dimensions of existence. We exist in the physical and material universe, but human so-called wisdom has sought to limit all existence to just that - the physical and material. Thus sadly, much of science seeks to explain all existence by means of physical origins and processes, even denying that there is a spiritual dimension. This is the underlying idea behind theories of, for example, the big bang, evolution, vast eras of time, etc. From this basis of belief comes much futile human endeavour in philosophy, psychiatry, politics, education, morality, etc.

If we accept the biblical teaching of the character of God, including His omnipotence, then we must see that there is a much bigger and eternal dimension *from which* the physical universe originated. This is made clear in Hebrews 11 v 3: "By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible". John 4 v 24 tells us that God is Spirit, and so we understand that this eternal dimension is best described as the spiritual dimension, or spiritual reality, and is far superior to the physical dimension, as wonderful as that is. Even the vastness of the physical universe just serves to display how great God is (Psalm 19 v 1). God is not only greater than the physical creation, for in His relationship with creation He is both transcendent (above creation) and immanent (present in every atom of creation). But also He has created humans to be stewards of His creation and His eternal companions. Throughout history human beings have instinctively sought to reach out to the spiritual dimension and, at last, in the coming of Jesus the Word, we have found the Way, the Truth and the Life (John 14 v 6) concerning spiritual reality.

In order to enjoy and fulfil this relationship it is the responsibility of every human being to turn from wilful and selfish sinfulness and enjoy a living and loving relationship with this eternal and triune Deity. And this we can do because we each have an immortal spirit (Ecclesiastes 3 v 11), which is our direct link with the spiritual realm. Our desired destiny therefore should be to live forever with God, which is gloriously possible. But as our spirits are immortal, the only alternative is that we will spend eternity far away from His presence and love - a fate worse than death.