

“God’s Unfailing Power”

Psalm 104

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Last week I spoke of God’s unfailing love from Romans 8:
 “For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, ³⁹ neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Does God have the power to make good on those promises?
 Is he truly greater than anything this world or life can throw at us?

I know that the obvious answers to that questions for church-going people is “yes” **but** I want you to think, this morning, about why you believe it.

What’s your evidence?

“Power,” according to the Oxford English Dictionary is “the ability to do or act”.

Omnipotence is having “**absolute** power”.

But God’s power is not arbitrary like some schoolyard bully proving he’s strong.

The exercise of God’s power always has a purpose.

Theologian Donald Bloesch wrote, “God is not power in and of itself but the One who exercises his power to liberate and redeem a lost human race... His almightiness is his persevering and tireless will to love, heal and redeem.” Bloesch 106-107 [God the Almighty](#)

As we think about God’s power today, I don’t want you to just think “Wow! Isn’t God strong!”

I want you to realize that all his power is purposeful and is directed to creating, saving, and forever keeping you and me.

Today I wish to speak of God's unfailing power – power great enough to keep his promises.

One of the greatest witnesses to the power of God is given to us in creation.

In Romans 1:20 we read, “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.”

The Psalmist wrote, “The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Psalm 19:1

It is **in** the world and universe around us that we see one of the most dramatic and effective witnesses to the power of God.

And today I want you to look with me at Psalm 104 to see a poetic description of **the greatness of God as revealed in creation**.

In this Psalm the author is obviously caught up in emotion as he **worships** God for his greatness in both creating and sustaining the universe.

Before we read the Psalm, I want you to see **how personal** this reflection on the power, the greatness of God is.

Psalm 104:1 “Praise the Lord, O my soul. O Lord, **my** God, you are very great; you are clothed with splendor and majesty.”

The Psalmist is captured by one mighty thought – “This God I am describing is “**MY** God”, the God in whom **I** trust.

And that's what I want us to know and even feel today.

Now listen as hymn writer describes God in **raw** power, **creative** power, **preserving** power, **the magnitude** of power, **the variety** his power creates, **the power of life and death** and ending with another statement of **the sheer power** of his power.

READ Psalm 104

Before I continue talking about the power of God as displayed in creation, I point out that **this biblical worldview** of the Psalmist and the church **is dismissed by many** in our western culture.

For the past couple of hundred years, many have declared there is **no place in rational modern thought for the myth of a God who created the universe.**

British chemist Peter Atkins wrote, “My aim is to argue that the universe can come into existence without intervention, and that there is no need to invoke the idea of a Supreme (God)...”.

He went on to say, “We (scientists) have been back to the time before time, and we have tracked the infinitely lazy Creator to his lair and he is of course not there.” (The Creation 115)

In his book Creation Revisited he writes, “From absolutely nothing, absolutely without intervention, there came into being rudimentary existence.” (Quoted in How Large is God p119)

Steven Hawking, in his very popular book entitled A Brief History of Time writes, “So long as the universe had a beginning, we could suppose it had a Creator. But if the universe is really self-contained, having no boundary or edge, it would have neither beginning nor end: it would simply be. What place then, for a Creator?” (In How Large is God)

Astronomer Hugh Ross was correct when he summarized that kind of thinking this way: “If the universe is simply uncreated, eternally self-existent or randomly self-assembled, then it has no purpose and consequently **we** have no purpose. Determinism then rules. Morality and religion are ultimately irrelevant, and there is no objective meaning to life.” (In the Creation Hypothesis 141)

But not all scientists think at Hawkings, Atkins and others.

I want you to listen to British physicist Paul Davies **and hear the change** this scientist went through in just five years.

In God and The New Physics in 1983 he denied the possibility of God as a creator and promoted an atheistic interpretation of the universe.

By 1984 in Superforce he wrote, “The laws of (physics)...seem themselves to be the product of exceedingly ingenious design...The universes must have a purpose.”

Then in 1988 in The Cosmic Blueprint he wrote, “I see powerful evidence that there is something going on behind it all. The impression of design is overwhelming.” (cited in Hugh Ross Creation and Time 128)

And Mr. Davies is only one of a fast growing number, in the scientific community today, who like George Greenstein would say:

“As we survey all the evidence, the thought insistently arises that some supernatural agency – or rather, Agency (God) – must be involved (in the existence of the universe). Is it possible that suddenly, without intending to we have stumbled upon scientific proof of the existence of a Supreme Being? Was it God who stepped in and so providentially crafted the cosmos for our benefit?” (1988 The Symbiotic Universe)

What some have been willing to say only in Sunday school they now say with growing boldness, “The heavens declare the glory of **GOD!**” “In the beginning, **GOD** created the heavens and the earth.”

Now back to Psalm 104.

What kind of God are you being asked to trust today?

What kind of God are you being invited to give your life to?

Is he capable of doing good for you?

Is he more powerful than all else?

I. The Psalm begins in verses 2-4, with a poetic statement about the raw power of God in creating the universe.

Look at verse 2 “He wraps himself in light as with a garment; he stretches out the heavens like a tent...”

The Psalmist uses some of the language of the Genesis account of creation.

Genesis 1:3 “And God said, ‘Let there be light and there was light’.”

Genesis 1:7-8 “So God made the expanse and separated the water under the expanse (earth) from the water above it (sky). And it was so. God called the expanse ‘sky’.”

So powerful is God, that the Psalmist pictures him as wrapping the light he created around himself like a coat and then taking his arm to stretch out the heavens (the skies) with all their galaxies around the earth.

So great is our God that the Psalmist pictures him as making the clouds his chariot and riding on the wings of the wind.

We look at the clouds and particularly the storms that emerge from them and we are in awe of their power.

Hurricane Katrina was hundreds of miles across and today there are far more people than before who respect the power of wind and water.

So powerful, so great is our God that all of creation is his servant – he created, controls and uses it all.

For all the questions that catastrophic storms raise about the goodness of God we must not attempt to answer them by reducing God to something less than the all-powerful God He is.

II. In verses 5-9 the poet draws **a word-picture** of day three of creation.

From Genesis 1:9-10 “And God said, ‘Let the water under the sky be gathered to one place, and let dry ground appear. And it was so. God called the dry ground ‘land’ and the gathered waters he called ‘seas’...”

Here in Psalm 104 the poet makes clear that it was God who caused all this to happen.

He spoke and the world came into existence.

And God assigned the water to the seas and the dry ground to land – and it was so!

The God we trust is the God who **speaks** and the waters of the earth obey just as Jesus demonstrated when he calmed the sea of Galilee.

The God in whom we place our confidence is the God who, with a word, can make heaven and earth appear and who, according to Peter, even disappear.

III. In verses 10-18 we see the greatness of God in **providing** for the world he has made.

I hope you were as impressed as I was the first time you learned about the way the earth cycles water, air, and soil.

It takes 100 years to produce even ½ inch of topsoil.

But the earth does it, year after year for thousands of years.

Water falls from the clouds, it flows down mountains, it waters the plains; plants and animals quench their thirst as the water flows into lakes and oceans.

Those plants, animals, lakes and oceans give off moisture, and the water cycles again to the atmosphere above us only again to form clouds that rain on the earth.

The air we breathe is constantly recycled, as is the carbon upon which all of us depend for life itself.

The whole complex system created and as Hebrews 1:8 says it, "Sustaining all things by his powerful word."

One author cites 32 ways God delicately balanced and sustains the world's relationship to the universe around us. I show you but four.

1. The number of stars (suns) in our planetary system:

If more than one, the tidal interactions would disrupt planetary orbits.

If less than one, the heat produced couldn't sustain life.

2. The surface gravity

If stronger the planet's atmosphere would retain too much ammonia and methane

If weaker the planet's atmosphere would lose too much water

3. The tilt of the earth's axis:

If greater, the surface temperature differences would be too great

If less, the surface temperature differences would be too great.

4. The thickness of the earth's crust

If thicker, too much oxygen would be transferred from the atmosphere to the crust.

If thinner, volcanic and earthquake activity would be too great. (Ross in The Creation Hypothesis 167)

“Oh Lord my God, you are very great!”

IV. In verses 19-23 the Psalmist introduces the very existence of the sun and moon, the celestial universe around us.

He notes particularly how it controls our lives.

But **who made it all?** – Our God!

Humans have always looked to the skies with awe.

Little else makes us feel smaller and the universe larger than to contemplate the immensity of the skies above us.

By the time of Christ, 2000 years ago, philosopher-astronomers thought the lights in the sky (the sun, moon and stars) were fixed on rings around the earth like concentric shells at differing distances from the earth.

The moon was many thousands of miles away.

The sun was thought to be 4 million miles away.

They thought that the stars were on the farthest circle or shell.

This idea held sway until the 1500s when it was judged that the sky was 79 million miles away from the earth and the universe was 80 million miles across.

In the late 1500s English astronomer, Thomas Digges, finally convinced many that the stars were not equal distance from the earth but were scattered throughout space **far** beyond what was earlier thought.

By the 1600s astronomers were calculating that **the universe** was much larger than earlier thought – it would take a bullet from a canon 700,000 years to reach the nearest star.

By the 1800s they were saying the universe was 300 quadrillion miles across (A number with 15 zeroes).

They coined the term “light-year” to describe distance – the distance that light travels in one year at 186,000 miles per second.

Thus the universe was 30,000 light-years across in size.

With further investigation of the Andromeda Galaxy scientists revised their estimate of the size of the universe so that it was then thought to be 200,000 light-years across - slightly over 1 quintillion miles.

That’s a number with 18 zeroes behind it.

When the 100-inch telescope at the Mount Wilson Observatory opened it was estimated that the universe was 1 million light-years across – five quintillion or five times as large as previously thought.

It now seems that the universe may be expanding and stars moving away from us at a rate so fast that we may never be able to calculate the size of the universe.

It may be beyond our ability to measure, maybe even to imagine.

We can see about 5000 stars with the naked eye.

It is estimated that there are 100 billion stars in our one galaxy - the “Milky Way”.

There are an estimated 100 billion galaxies which means 10 sextillion stars. (21 zeroes)

If each person on earth had an equal number of those stars, 2 trillion (2,000,000,000,000) stars would be yours. (*How Large is God, 23ff*)

Howard Van Til of Calvin College wrote, “The universe in which we live is no place for a small God...” (*How Large is God* 131)

“O Lord, my God, you are very great!”

V. In verses 24-26 the Poet speaks of the greatness of God in the variety of his creation.

Psalm 104:24-25 “How **many** are your works, O Lord! In wisdom you made them all; the earth is **full** of your creatures. There is the sea, vast and spacious, teeming with creatures beyond number – living things both large and small.”

Veterinarian and author James Harriot didn’t originate the phrase, “all things great and small”.

He took it from poet Cecil Alexander who took it from Psalm 104:25

“How **many** are your works... beyond number.”

40 years ago it was believed that in the world there were over 1 million different kinds of living things.

25 years ago it was believed there were 5 million kinds of living things.

For example, we could identify 250,000 flowering plants.

Today it is estimated that probably over 20 million different kinds of living things exist. <http://www.canadianbiodiversity.mcgill.ca/english/species/index.htm>

Thus far we have named only about 1.5 million.

Much of life is beneath the oceans, which cover 2/3 of the earth’s surface and have been only partially explored. (From Calvin DeWitt in Earthwise)

Until the 1930s scientists believed that neutrons and protons were the smallest particles of life.

In 1958 an almanac was published to list all the particles – it was 19 pages long and discussed 16 new particles of matter smaller than neutrons and protons.

By 1984 that almanac was 304 pages with 200 ever smaller particles being discovered such as muons, pions, and neutrinos.

Particles known as quarks are now believed to be in 18 different kinds.

Now with gluons and leptons added to the list some scientists are acknowledging that they may not have even come close to the smallest particles or building blocks of matter.

“There may be additional levels, and even the possibility that there are an infinite number of levels... Physical reality could conceivably be a kind of cosmic onion, with level below level below level. It may be that the levels never come to an end.” (Morris quoted in Herrman in How Large is God p230)

Whether we go out to the stars or in to the smallest particle of life, our universe is not static but dynamic – ever expanding, ever changing, with new variations billions of times a day.

The universe is not like some gigantic machine simply doing the same thing over and over again.

Our world is moving - we have traveled through space over 1000 miles just as I have spoken this last sentence.

Like snowflakes, no plants, animals or even children are alike – each one a slight variation of all the others that have ever existed or will exist.

“Oh Lord, my God, you are very great!”

VI. In verses 27-30 the Psalmist describes the power of God over life and death.

I can delay here only to say, if we had stood outside Lazarus’s tomb or had been where Jesus showed himself alive to his disciples after his resurrection, we would know beyond a shadow of a doubt that our God has the power of life and death.

“Oh, Lord my God, you are very great!”

A year or so into the Civil War a group of statesmen met in Washington D.C. to lament the South's surprising strength and victories.

The famous Fredrick Douglas, speaking on behalf of many, choked with emotion as he described the terrible fate he feared was awaiting the North.

In a pause, that was pregnant with desperation, a voice called out from the gallery.

A mature older woman spoke with absolute conviction: "Mr. Fredrick Douglas, God is not dead!"

Number 23:19

"God is not a man, that He should lie,
Nor a son of man, that He should repent;
Has He said, and will He not do it?
Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?"

I end this message with the closing words of this Psalm:

Psalm 104:31-33

"May the Glory of the Lord endure forever; may the Lord rejoice in his works – he who looks at the earth and it trembles, who touches the mountains and they smoke. I will sing to the Lord all my life, I will sing praises to my God as long as I live."

"O Lord my God, you are very great."