

## From: Discovering God

### God is All-Powerful

*I am the LORD, the God of all mankind. Is anything too hard for me?  
(Jeremiah 32:27)*

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

#### **Batteries not required**

I love Christmas: the celebration of Jesus' birth; the carol services; the tree; the fantastic food, and of course, the presents. When my children were growing up they had their wish list written by September, then constantly modified, scrapped and created anew right up to Christmas Eve. No matter what appeared on those lists, however, one item was never requested: batteries. Each year Dianne and I scoured the wording on the box of any electrical or powered toy we had bought them looking for the immortal phrase: 'batteries not included'. Eventually we just bought a complete stock of every size and shape. Sooner or later the cry would go up sometime on Christmas Day: 'Dad: the batteries have run out!' The present was now useless: it had lost its source of power.

I am so grateful that God does not run on batteries; neither does he ever need to be connected to a charger. In previous chapters we have discovered that God as *Elohim* has the fullness of power. As *El Shaddai* he has all the resources within himself to meet all the needs of all his people all the time. As the infinite God he has limitless power, both in quantity and quality. It naturally follows that God is not merely powerful, he is all powerful. That does not mean he simply has more power than anybody else; it means he has all the power and all the ability necessary to act as God. The term we use to describe this all-powerfulness is omnipotence.

God's omnipotence is his ability to do whatever he wants. You only have to read the opening sentences of the Bible to see the incredible, incomparable dimension of power that God has; he created this whole universe by speaking. That did not demand any concentrated extra work on his part; he did not have to summon up all his strength in a major effort. God spoke words and everything came into being. That is real power. In fact, the whole Bible is filled with instances of God's power: the parting of the Red Sea; the sun standing still; children born to barren women; men surviving a fiery furnace with no smell of smoke on them; enemy armies destroyed by an angel; dead people raised to life; floating axe heads; five thousand men fed with five loaves and two fish; water turned into wine; and sinners transformed into sons of God! No wonder the Psalmist encourages us to:

*Praise the LORD for his acts of power; praise him for his surpassing  
greatness. (Psalm 150:2)*

#### **Mission Impossible**

God's omnipotence means that he is the God of the impossible. He specialises in the impossible; our impossibilities are possibilities for him. He loves a challenge! Sometimes I talk to people about the place where they live and they say, 'Oh, this is a

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hard place for the gospel. In fact, it's the toughest place in the country. It will take a miracle to build the church here'. Others say about their loved ones: 'My dad's a tough nut to crack. He's not interested in God'. 'My son is so far away from God right now. I don't know if the Lord can reach him'. These are genuine sentiments, but they are misplaced. The immediacy of the situation has replaced faith in the God who is able to do the impossible. All you have to do is read the Bible: the gospel broke through the most powerful empire the world had seen; a murderer called Saul of Tarsus became the apostle Paul; a prodigal son came to his senses and became a man of God. That is what God told Jeremiah:

*I am the LORD, the God of all mankind. Is anything too hard for me?  
(Jeremiah 32:27)*

He is the same God of the impossible today. I love to read books about people like Smith Wigglesworth and Kathryn Kuhlman, and the incredible miracles they performed and witnessed. I thrill to hear testimonies of believers who have received miraculous healings; of those who have been delivered from impossible situations; of supernatural manifestations of the Holy Spirit that blow the natural mind. I could fill this book with testimonies of God performing impossibilities. Just the other day I heard of a young boy who had lost his little finger in an accident. He was prayed for in his local church; there and then a new finger grew! Recently I met a Christian lady who went to lay hands on her father who was in hospital. He had cancerous tumours in his body. This lady had heard that God is a God of the impossible. She laid her hands on her father while he was asleep (he had never shown any interest in God all his life). Two days later, when the doctors performed more tests, all the tumours had gone! The father immediately gave his life to Jesus. And surely that is the greatest miracle of all: he became a new creation in Christ.

The issue for us in this rationalistic world, where so many will believe only if they see the evidence with their physical eyes, is not God's ability to do the impossible; the issue is whether we have faith in him that he *will* do the impossible. Jesus met this many times in his ministry. Once he came across a man whose son was possessed by a demon. He pleaded with Jesus:

*'If you can do anything, take pity on us and help us.'* (Mark 9:22)

At first glance, Jesus' response appeared to be somewhat sharp. In reality he was trying to help this man to rise above his situation and get a new perspective on it by receiving a revelation of the God of the impossible:

*"'If you can'?" said Jesus. "Everything is possible for him who believes."*  
(Mark 9:23)

Believing in the omnipotent God of the impossible is a vital aspect of the life of faith. Abraham discovered this to be true; he and Sarah had been promised by God that in their old age they would have a son. Abraham was almost one hundred years old by that time, and Sarah was ninety. Old people do not have babies; it is impossible. But God had said it would happen; furthermore he was able to make it happen because he is all powerful and backs up his promises with his omnipotent ability. Abraham and Sarah put their faith in God of the impossible, not in the

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impossibility of their situation. They looked at the impossibility and looked at God; they decided to trust God and not their impossible circumstance:

*Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, "So shall your offspring be." Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead—since he was about a hundred years old—and that Sarah's womb was also dead. Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, **being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised.** (Romans 4:18-21)*

### The impossibility of God

Having established that the all-powerful God is the God of the impossible, that nothing is too hard for him, we also have to make it very clear that there are some things God cannot do. God has impossibilities too. God is not a vast container of power, like a divine nuclear bomb. He is an omnipotent Person, and his nature determines the way he acts in his power. Let me explain. The omnipotence of God does not mean that God can do anything, nor that he is merely the sum of all power. There are things that are impossible for God to be and do; yet he still remains omnipotent. In fact he is omnipotent because of these impossibilities; they are strengths, not weaknesses. These impossibilities help make God who he is. Look at this scripture:

*Because God wanted to make the unchanging nature of his purpose very clear to the heirs of what was promised, he confirmed it with an oath. 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. (Hebrews 6:17-18)*

God is incapable of lying; he is incapable of sinning. It is totally impossible for him to deny himself or act contrary to his nature. It will never happen. It is not even as if God weighs up the possibilities of doing such things and then decides against such acts. If we think this is the way he exists, that he mulls over his moral choices before making the right one, then we do not understand his nature of goodness. Such thoughts never enter God's mind; he is morally incapable of even thinking such things. It is impossible for him.

The writer of Hebrews says there are two unchangeable things which make it impossible for God to lie. Let me remind you of what we said about this in a previous chapter. These two things are his nature and his word. The nature of God is such that he will think and do good and only good. His word is totally, utterly and completely true and faithful. Only truth comes from his mouth; whatever he tells us about himself and ourselves is true. God's word is his integrity. That is the basis upon which our hope and faith are founded. If we have fled to One who might turn against us, or who is not all he seems, like a character in a novel who appears to be good but who is really bad, then we have no ground of encouragement or trust. But this impossibility of God is in fact a wonderful thing for us:

*We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and certain. (Hebrews 6:19)*

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### Long time coming

I know I am not the only person to have had these thoughts: 'If God is all powerful, why does it sometimes appear that he's not? And why does it sometimes take so long for him to do things?' If I were God I would do some things differently. For example, let us say Adam had sinned at 9 o'clock in the morning. With me being God, Jesus would have arrived on earth about ten seconds later, died on the cross, risen from the dead, ascended back to heaven and completed his mission by 9.01, at the latest. Everything would be in order by 9.02. Simple, Fast, Efficient. All Powerful Roger.

But God did not do it that way. On the contrary, he was prepared to spend hundreds and thousands of our years working out his purpose: Jesus had to wait until he was thirty before he started his ministry; the Israelites were in Egypt four hundred years; Abraham waited twenty five years for his son Isaac to be born; Pentecost was two thousand years ago. But God in his omnipotence did not appear all rushed by it all. He does not do the right thing at the right time; he does the right thing at **just** the right time:

*You see, **at just the right time**, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. (Romans 5:6)*

At whose 'just the right time' did Jesus die? At God's 'just the right time', of course. It was not a second too soon or a second too late. It was at just the right time. And since it was at God's 'just the right time' then it was also at our 'just the right time'. There is no need to panic; God is in omnipotent control. He always acts at just the right time.

The way God acts may also cause us to wonder about his omnipotence. If we had been living in Israel two thousand years ago during the time of Caesar Augustus, then we would have been part of a nation on the move. Everybody had to travel to their home towns to register for a census that was being taken across the whole Roman Empire. It was a massive undertaking with hundreds of thousands of people on the move. It was the major social and political happening of the day; a world event. There was no thought of the plan and purpose of an omnipotent God among the Roman authorities carrying out this census. But behind it all another hand was at work. The whole enterprise was originated and orchestrated by God for one purpose: to get Joseph and Mary from one end of Israel to the other so that the Word of God could be fulfilled and the Messiah be born in Bethlehem. That was the big story from God's omnipotent perspective; the census was merely the way he acted in history to achieve what he wanted.

Thirty three years later that same Messiah was standing before Pontius Pilate, the Roman Governor, on trial for his life. Jesus was beaten, battered and bruised, almost beyond recognition. To all intents and purposes he was merely another rabble rousing preacher from an obscure northern town, completely powerless and totally defeated. To the natural eye, the notion of an omnipotent God at work was a sick joke. But that is exactly what was taking place. Jesus did not die in defeat; the omnipotent

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God was actively at work, achieving his eternal purpose. In the moment that he was arrested Jesus had told his disciples:

*'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?'* (Matthew 26:53-54)

God could have acted in omnipotence by rescuing Jesus with seventy two thousand angels: what a spectacle that would have been! But it would not have served God's purpose. It was just as omnipotent for Jesus to refuse to call the angels as it would have been to summon them. It is all a matter of perspective:

*We fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.* (2Corinthians 4:18)

God works in his own way to his own agenda. As the God of covenant he works in covenant relationship with us. We must be people who learn to understand his ways, so we know when to call on him for the impossible and when to be patient and remain in faith when things do not appear to be happening. But even at those times the omnipotent God is always at work. And in it all, remember:

*The LORD reigns, let the nations tremble; he sits enthroned between the cherubim, let the earth shake.* (Psalm 99:1)

God is the God of the impossible. Your impossibilities are his opportunities to demonstrate his omnipotence. That miracle you are about to receive is God being God. Believe him for the impossible; he is the God of all power.

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