

# Free Grace Broadcaster

ISSUE 171

## THE MAJESTY OF GOD

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*“Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and thou art exalted as head above all.”*

1 Chronicles 29:11

### Our Purpose

*“To humble the pride of man,  
to exalt the grace of God in salvation,  
and to promote real holiness in heart and life.”*

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#171

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# THE MAJESTY OF GOD IN PROVIDENCE

G. D. Watson (1845-1923)

**G**OD never makes half a providence any more than man makes half a pair of scissors. This golden sentence was coined by the late Dr. Gordon, and a thousand passages of Scripture, and ten thousand incidents in our lives, confirm its truthfulness. We see how perfectly God works in creation, and how nicely He dovetails part with part—wedding strength to beauty, mountain with valley, zones with climates, and products with seasons. He so beautifully fits the fin to the sea, the wing to the air, the eye to light, the ear to pulsations of the atmosphere, and each joint to its socket, that the whole creation becomes a glass transparency, revealing the matchless wisdom of God. It shows Omnipresence in every atom, and discloses the momentary operation of His infinite will in every successive instant through thousands of years, without a pause, without a blunder or a single trace of His forgetting anything, from the insect in a quivering leaf to the giant orbit of suns and stellar systems.

It is all simply inconceivable, and could we see it in its total reality, it would crush our intellects with an overwhelming weight of sublimity. And then think that all this infinite perfection of balancing part with part is repeated over and over again in the inspired Scriptures. These are like another created universe, in which there is an infallible compilation and record of history, biography, precept, parable, promise, poem, punishment, names of persons, places, and things. There are verbs descriptive of every moral act that transpires in heaven, earth or hell. All are so arranged as to contain not a single error, or foolish or useless statement. They tower as far above all human books as the noon day sun rises above a tallow candle, and reveals such vast worlds of intellectual and spiritual truth, linked in such golden chains of beauty from Genesis to Revelation, as to form an intellectual universe, surpassing in brilliancy the material creation.

And then in addition to these two creations of nature and Scripture, there is a third universe of God's providences, which is crowned with infallible arrangements of God's forethought. Every moment in the life of every human being, of all the millions on earth, is filled in with the most minute, wise, delicate, loving, and just superintendence of that same God Who floods every atom of nature and every word of Scripture with His personal presence. Verily we are walking through a limitless ocean of divine love and supervision.

The special providence of God is a third Bible, which He is incessantly writing out in the lives of His creatures. On the silver pages of each swiftly passing day He is writing out His dealings with each of us in such accuracy and compassionate love, and patient, impartial wisdom. He balances need with supply, dovetails prayer to answer, interblends sorrow with joy, and fear with hope, and sweetly joins faith and fruition, and the supernatural with the natural, and the motive of the heart with the reward of the act. If we could see it all as an angel can discern it, the very sight would dazzle us into ecstasy.

At the very moment that Isaiah's yearning heart was mourning over the defects of his spiritual life, saying, "Woe is me," the seraphim (types of glorified prophets) were crying, "Heaven and earth are full of God's glory," for they saw the presence of God moving through every atom of nature and providence.

If we take time to think quietly over the daily dealings of God with us, and lovingly watch for every little symptom of God's presence in us and around us, we will soon be astonished at the degree we will discover of His presence, and at the perfection with which He weaves things together for our good. He never makes half a providence.

The very night that young Solomon was praying for wisdom to judge rightly the people, a poor, heart-broken mother, in the lowly walks of life, was crying for her babe that another woman had stolen from her. The same infinite ear that drank in the sweet prayer of the beautiful young prince, at the same moment drank in the sad wail of a poor outcast mother in the slums of Jerusalem. He gave the young prince the superhuman wisdom to know how to judge between the women, and to settle the dispute as to who was the mother of the living child.

The same God who saw the lonely Jacob winding his sad way over the desert of Syria, looking for a home, arranged to have the beautiful Rachel go forth with her father's sheep, and have them meet at the well. They were each but the two hemispheres of one thought in the mind of God. Are not our lives crowded with just such providential supplementings?

I know of a Christian worker who at one time was hedged about with what, to all human opinion, were absolutely insurmountable difficulties. But he shut himself in with God, with much fasting and prayer that God would open a certain field of work to him. In his prayer he read the Scripture where Ahasuerus was kept awake all night in answer to Mordecai's prayer, and he begged the Lord to keep somebody awake all night in his behalf. Twelve hundred miles away a Christian gentleman, whom he had never met, was kept awake all night in prayer and study about that man. God spoke to that gentleman in a distinct voice, "Send that man a check for a certain amount of money, and have him come here and work with you in a mission." Before the check had time to reach that worker, a neighbor of his called upon him and said, "I have had a dream, in which I saw a large,

portly man and yourself at work in a certain city.” He went on to describe what he saw in his dream of persons and places, which in a few weeks came to pass with the most absolute precision.

How slow we are to trust God in all the details of life, just as really and unbrokeably as we trust our souls to the merit of Christ’s precious blood! Yet the handwriting of God on the wall of every passing hour is just as infallible as His handwriting in Scripture. Can God be divided? Can God be any less infinite in His providences than He is in His Word? “Oh, fools, and slow of heart, not to believe all.” If the Holy Spirit has called you to a certain line of work, He never takes back His own call. God does not fool with His creatures to mock at their deepest convictions and yearnings of heart. As truly as He has spoken in your heart a call to any sphere of work, so truly has He prepared that sphere for you somewhere in the world, and at the right point of time He will bring the two hemispheres of His providence together.

God never makes a wing to mock a poor bird, but He fills an azure sky with air upon which the wing can fly. There is plenty of room in the air for every wing there is formed. God does not allow the great eagle to monopolize the whole atmosphere, but each little sparrow shall have the boundless domain open to it. *When we...seek only to please God, no creature, nor any multiplied millions of creatures, either good or bad, can get in our way, or hinder us, or do us any harm.* God delights to reveal Himself to the real humble heart, in little ways and startling providences, which lofty-minded persons never have eyes to see, nor faith to accredit.

I was once on my way from South Carolina to Texas to work in meetings for the Lord. I had only a limited time to reach my destination before the Sabbath, and a very limited amount of money to pay my expenses. When I boarded the train in Atlanta, the conductor said, “The South-bound mail from New York is over two hours late, and we shall have to wait for it.” This would throw us over two hours behind in Birmingham, Alabama, where I was to connect with the train for New Orleans. On inquiring if the through train to New Orleans would wait for us at Birmingham, he said, “No, for that train is always on time, and does not wait for late trains. Your only way is to lie over at Birmingham for the night.”

I at once sat down and leaned my head against the window, and closing my eyes told my Heavenly Father all about it—that I was working for His precious Son, that I belonged entirely to His Son, that the interest of His only begotten Son was infinitely greater than all the railroads, and that He saw my scanty means and my limited time before the Sabbath. Would He please make that fast bound train to New Orleans in some way get delayed just as long as we should be? A sweet restfulness settled on my spirit, and I felt like smiling.

When we reached Birmingham, sure enough there stood the long train waiting for us. It had been detained in an unusual way by something they could hardly

account for, and when I asked the conductor how he happened to be so late, he said, “We don’t know, unless it was to get passengers from Atlanta.” I then told him of my prayer, and said, “I wish you railroad men would put your trust in the living God.”

You may rest assured that you are always enveloped in the presence of the Holy Spirit. He watches every movement of your inner being, and has His hand this very moment on everything in creation. He is incessantly adjusting causes to effects, and the inner spirit to the outer circumstance, and things near to things hundreds and thousands of miles away. Nothing can be too small for His loving notice and superintendence. Let us watch for God in His daily dealings with us. The more thoughtfully we watch, the more we will see of Him. And the more we see, the more we will love Him.

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**George D. Watson** (1845-1923): was born in Virginia into a committed Christian family with six children. Although self-willed, he gave his life to Christ during the American Civil War at a camp meeting for soldiers, after he had joined the Southern Army at age 18. He attended a Bible institute and began to preach the Gospel in 1868, pastoring several churches. Later he traveled extensively throughout the USA, England, and the Far East.



# THE GREAT WORK OF GOD: RAIN

John Piper

*“I would seek unto God, and unto God would I commit my cause: Which doeth great things and unsearchable; marvellous things without number: Who giveth rain upon the earth, and sendeth waters upon the fields”—Job 5:8-10.*

**I**F you said to someone: “My God does great and unsearchable things; he does wonders without number,” and they responded, “Really? Like what?” would you say, “Like rain”?

When I read these verses from Job recently, I felt, at first, the way I did on hearing some bad poetry that went something like this: “Let me suffer, let me die, just to win your hand; let me even climb a hill, or walk across the land.” Even? I would suffer and die to have your hand, and even walk across the land? As if walking across the land were more sacrificial than dying? This sounded to me like a joke.

But Job is not joking. “God does great and unsearchable things, wonders without number. He gives rain on the earth.” In Job’s mind rain really is one of the great, unsearchable wonders that God does. So when I read this a few weeks ago, I resolved not to treat it as meaningless pop musical lyrics. I decided to have a conversation with myself (which is what I mean by meditation).

Is rain a great and unsearchable wonder wrought by God? Picture yourself as a farmer in the Near East, far from any lake or stream. A few wells keep the family and animals supplied with water. But if the crops are to grow and the family is to be fed from month to month, water has to come from another source on the fields. From where?

Well, the sky. The sky? Water will come out of the clear blue sky? Well, not exactly. Water will have to be carried in the sky from the Mediterranean Sea over several hundred miles, and then be poured out on the fields from the sky.

Carried? How much does it weigh? Well, if one inch of rain falls on one square mile of farmland during the night, that would be 27,878,400 cubic feet of water, which is 206,300,160 gallons, which is *1,650,501,280 pounds of water!*

That’s heavy. So how does it get up in the sky and stay up there if it’s so heavy? Well, it gets up there by evaporation. Really? That’s a nice word. What’s it mean? It means that the water stops being water for a while so it can go up and not down. I see. Then how does it get down? Well, condensation happens. What’s that? The

water starts becoming water again by gathering around little dust particles between .00001 and .0001 centimeters wide. That's small.

What about the salt? Salt? Yes, the Mediterranean Sea is salt water. That would kill the crops. What about the salt? Well, the salt has to be taken out. Oh. So the sky picks up a billion pounds of water from the sea, takes out the salt, carries the water (or whatever it is, when it is not water) for three hundred miles, and then dumps it (now turned into water again) on the farm?

Well, it doesn't dump it. If it dumped a billion pounds of water on the farm, the wheat would be crushed. So the sky dribbles the billion pounds of water down in little drops. And they have to be big enough to fall for one mile or so without evaporating, and small enough to keep from crushing the wheat stalks.

How do all these microscopic specks of water that weigh a billion pounds get heavy enough to fall (if that's the way to ask the question)? Well, it's called coalescence. What's that? It means the specks of water start bumping into each other and join up and get bigger, and when they are big enough, they fall. Just like that? Well, not exactly, because they would just bounce off each other instead of joining up if there were no electric field present. What? Never mind. Take my word for it.

I think, instead, I will just take Job's word for it. I still don't see why drops ever get to the ground, because if they start falling as soon as they are heavier than air, they would be too small not to evaporate on the way down. But if they wait to come down, what holds them up till they are big enough not to evaporate? Yes, I am sure there's a name for that too. But I am satisfied for now that, by any name, this is a great and unsearchable thing that God has done. I think I should be thankful—lots more thankful than I am.

Taken from "*A Godward Life*," Vol. 2, page 28. Multnomah Press. Used by permission.

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# THE MAJESTIC VOICE

C.H. Spurgeon (1834-1892)

*“The voice of the Lord is full of majesty”—Psalms 29:4.*

**A**LL God’s works praise him whether they be magnificent or minute, they all discover the wisdom, the power and the benevolence of their Creator. “All thy works praise thee, O God.” But there are some of his more majestic works which sing the song of praise louder than others. There are some of his doings, upon which there seems to be graven in larger letters than usual the name of God. Such are the lofty mountains, which worship God with uncovered heads both night and day, such are the rolling seas, too mighty to be managed by man, but held in check by God, and such, especially, are the thunders and the lightnings. The lightnings are the glances of the eyes of God, and the thunders are the utterings of his voice. The thunder has been usually attributed to God more especially, though philosophers assure us that it is to be accounted for by natural causes. We believe them, but we prefer ourselves, to look to the first great cause, and we are content with that old and universal belief, that the thunder is the voice of God. It is marvellous what effect the thunder has had upon all kinds of men. In reading an ode of Horace the other day, I found...that he despised God, and intended to live merrily; but by-and-bye he hears the thunder, and acknowledging that there is a Jehovah, who lives on high, he trembles before him. The most wicked of men have been obliged to acknowledge that there must be a Creator, when they have heard that marvellous voice of his sounding through the sky. **Men of the stoutest nerve and the boldest blasphemy have become the weakest of all creatures, when God has in some degree manifested himself in the mighty whirlwind, or in the storm.** “He breaketh the cedars of Lebanon,” he bringeth down the stout hearts; he layeth down the mighty, and he obliges those who never acknowledged him to reverence him when they hear his voice. The Christian will acknowledge the thunder to be the voice of God, from the fact, that if he be in the right frame of mind, it always suggests to him holy thoughts. I do not know how it may be with you, but I scarce ever hear the rolling thunder but I begin to forget earth and look upwards to my God. I am unconscious of any feeling of terror or pain; it is rather a feeling of delight that I experience, for I like to sing that verse—

*“The God that rules on high  
And thunders when he please,  
That rides upon the stormy sky  
And manages the seas.  
This awful God is ours  
Our Father and our love  
He shall send down his heavenly powers  
To carry us above.”*

He is our God, and I like to sing that, and think of it: but there is something so terrible in the time of that voice when God is speaking, something so terrific to other men, and humbling to the Christian, that he is obliged to sink very low in his own estimation; then he looks up to God, and cries, “infinite Jehovah, spare a worm, crush not an unworthy wretch. I know it is thy voice; I reverence thee with solemn awe; I prostrate myself before thy throne; thou art my God, and beside thee there is none else.” It might well have occurred to a Jewish mind to have called the thunder the voice of God, when he considered the loudness of it, when all other voices are hushed: even if they be the loudest voices mortals can utter, or the most mighty sounds; yet are they but indistinct whispers, compared with the voice of God in the thunder; and, indeed, they are entirely lost when God speaks from his throne, and makes even the deaf hear, and those who are unwilling to acknowledge him hear his voice.

But we need not stop to prove, that the thunder is the voice of God, from any natural feeling of man, we have Scripture to back us up, and therefore we shall do our best to appeal to that. In the first place, there is a passage in the book of Exodus where I would refer you; where, in the margin, we are told that the thunder is the voice of God. In the 9th chapter and the 28th verse, Pharaoh says “Entreat the Lord (for it is enough) that there be no more mighty thunderings and hail.” The original Hebrew has it, and my margin has it, and the margin of all of you who are wise enough to have marginal Bibles—“Voices of God.” “Let there be no more voices of God and hail.” So that it is not a mere illusion, but we are really warranted by Scripture, in saying, that “the thunder is the voice of God lifted up in the sky.” Now, for another proof; to what shall we refer you unless we send you to the book of Job? In his 37th chapter, 3rd verse, he says, “he directeth it under the whole heaven, and his lightning unto the ends of the earth. After it a voice roareth: he thundereth with the voice of his excellency: and he will not stay them when his voice is heard. God thundereth marvellously with his voice; great things doeth he, which we cannot comprehend.” And so he says in the 40th chapter at the 9th verse, “Hast thou an arm like God? or canst thou thunder with a voice like him?” I am glad, in this age, when men are seeking to forget God, and put him entirely out of the creation, and trying to put laws in the place of God, as if laws could govern a universe without someone to execute those laws, and put power and force into them—I am glad, I say, to be able to bear testimony to something which men cannot deny to be caused immediately by God the mighty One himself.

There is one striking proof I would offer to you, that the thunder is the voice of God, and that is the fact, that when God spake on Sinai, and gave forth his law, his voice is then described, if not in the first passage, yet in the reference to it, as being great thunders. “There were thunders and lightnings, exceedingly loud and

long.” God spoke then, and he spoke so terribly in thunder, that the people requested that they might hear that voice no more. And I must refer you to one passage in the New Testament, which will bear me out thoroughly in describing the thunder to be indeed the voice of God, and that is in the 11th chapter of the Gospel according to St. John, where Jesus lifted up his voice to heaven at the tomb of Lazarus, and asked his Father to answer him; and then [later] a voice came from heaven, and they that stood by said, “that it thundered” (Joh 12:29); it was the voice of God which was then heard, and they ascribed it to the thunder. Here is a remarkable proof that the thunder has usually been ascribed to God as being his voice, and when God’s voice has been heard on any remarkable occasion, it has always been accompanied by the sound of thunder, or, rather, has been the sound of thunder itself.

Well, now, leaving these considerations altogether, we come to make some remarks, not upon the voice of God in the thunder, but upon the voice of God as elsewhere heard; for it is not only heard there naturally, but there are spiritual voices and other voices of the Most High. *“The voice of the Lord is full of majesty.”* God has spoken in various ways to man, in order that man might not think him a God so engrossed with himself that he does not observe his creatures. It has graciously pleased the Divine Being, sometimes to look upon man, at other times to stretch out his hand to man, sometimes to reveal himself in mortal appearance to man, and frequently to speak to man. At sundry times he has spoken absolutely without the use of means—by his own voice, as for instance when he spoke from Sinai’s blazing mountain-top, or when he spoke to Samuel in his bed, and said unto him several times, “Samuel, Samuel,” or when he spoke to Elijah, and Elijah said, “he heard the whirlwind, and he saw the fire;” and after that there was “a still small voice.” He has spoken immediately from heaven by his own lips on one or two occasions in the life of Christ. He spoke to him at the waters of Jordan when he said, “This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.” He spoke to him on another occasion, to which we have already referred. He spoke—it was God that spoke, though it was Jesus Christ—he spoke to Saul, when on his way to Damascus, “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?” He has spoken several times immediately by his own voice, without the intervention of means at all; at other seasons, God has been pleased to speak to men by angels. He has, as it were written the message, and sent it down by his messenger from on high: he hath told to man many wonders and secrets by the lips of those glorious beings, who are flaming spirits of his, that do his pleasure, As frequently, perhaps, God has spoken to men in dreams, in visions of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon them.

Then, when the natural ear hath been closed, he hath opened the ear of the spirit, and he hath taught truths which, otherwise, men could never have known. More frequently still, God hath spoken to men by men. From the days of Noah

even until now God has raised up his prophets, by whose lips he hath spoken. It was not Jeremiah who uttered that lament which we read, but it was Jehovah, the God in Jeremiah speaking through the natural organs of his voice. It was not Isaiah who foresaw the future, and foretold the doom of millions, it was God in Isaiah thus speaking. And so with every prophet of the Lord now living, and every minister whom God hath raised up to speak: when we speak with power and efficacy, and unction it is not we that speak, but it is the Spirit of our Father who dwelleth in us. God speaks through men, and now also, we know that God speaks through his own written Word of Inspiration. When we turn to the page of Scripture, we must not look upon these words as being in any degree the words of men, but as being the words of God. And though they be silent, yet do they speak; and though they cause no noise, yet, verily, “their God hath gone forth throughout all the world and their noise unto the ends of the earth.”

And yet, again, God even now speaks himself by the use of means. He does not make man speak, he does not make the Bible speak merely of itself, but he speaks through the Bible, and through the man, as really as if he had used no books or employed no man to speak for him. Ay, and there be times when the Spirit of God speaks in the heart of man without the use of means. I believe there be many secret impulses, many solemn thoughts, many mysterious directions given to us without a single word having been uttered, but by the simple motions of God’s Spirit in the heart. This thing I know, that when I have neither heard nor read, I have yet felt the voice of God within me, and the Spirit hath, himself, revealed some dark mystery, opened some secret, guided me into some truth, given me some direction, led me in some path, or in some other way hath immediately spoken to me himself; and I believe it is so with every man at conversion, with every Christian, as he is carried on through his daily life, and especially as he nears the shores of the grave—that God, the Everlasting One, speaks himself to his soul, with a voice that he cannot resist, although he may have resisted the mere voice of man. The voice of the Lord is still heard, even as it was heard aforetime. Glory be to his name!

And now, my beloved, I come to the doctrine, “The voice of the Lord is full of majesty.” First of all, *essentially*, “The voice of the Lord” must be “full of majesty;” secondly, *constantly*, “the voice of the Lord is full of majesty;” thirdly, *efficaciously*, in all it does, “The voice of the Lord is full of majesty.”

### **I. Essentially Full**

First, then, “THE VOICE OF THE LORD IS FULL OF MAJESTY.” Ay, and so it should be. Should not that voice be full of majesty which comes from Majesty? Is not God the King of kings, and the Ruler of the whole earth? Should he, then, speak with a voice below his own dignity? Should not the king speak with the voice of a king? Should not a mighty monarch speak with a monarch’s tongue?

And surely, if God be God, and if he be the Master of all worlds, and the Emperor of the universe, he must, when he speaks, speak with the monarch's tongue and with a majestic voice. The very nature of God requires that all he does should be Godlike. His looks are looks divine; his thoughts are thoughts divine; and should not his words be words divine, since they come from him? Verily, from the very essence of God, we might infer that his voice would be full of majesty.

But what do we mean by a voice having majesty? I take it that no man's voice can have majesty in it unless it is true; a lie, if it should be spoken in the noblest language would never be majestic; a falsehood, if it be uttered by the most eloquent lips, would be a mean and paltry thing, however it might be spoken; and an untruth, wherever uttered, and by whomsoever, is not majestic; it never can be truth, and truth only can ever have majesty about it. And because God's words are pure truth, unalloyed with the least degree of error, therefore does it come to pass that his words are full of majesty. Whatever I hear my Father say in Scripture, wherever he speaks to me by the ministry, or by his Spirit, if he speaks it, there is not the slightest alloy of untruth about it. I may receive it just as it is.

*“My faith may on his promise live, May on his promise die.”*

I need not reason about it, it is enough for me to take it and believe it, because he has said it, I need not try to prove it to the worldling: if I were to prove it, he would believe it none the better; if the voice of God's majesty doth not convince him, sure the voice of my reasoning never can. I need not stand and cut and divide between this voice of God and the other, I know it must be true, if he has said it, and therefore I will believe all that I believe God has said, believing that his voice is full of majesty.

Then, again, when we speak of a majestic voice, we mean by it, that it is a **commanding voice**. A man may speak truth, and yet there may be but little majesty in what he says, because he speaks it in a tone that never can command attention and catch the ear of his fellow creatures. In fact, there are some men, expounders of truth, who had better hold their tongues, for they do truth an injury. We know full many who affect to preach God's truth, who go out to battle, who take the lance in their hands to defend the honor of Christ, but who wield the lance so ill, and who have so little of God's Spirit, that they do but disgrace his holy name and it would have been better had they remained at home. Oh! beloved, God's voice when he speaks, is always a commanding voice. Let the monarch arise in the midst of his creatures, they may have been conversing with each other before; but hush! his majesty is about to speak. It is so with the majesty of God; if he should speak in heaven the angels would hush their hallelujahs, and suspend the notes of their golden harps, to hear him; and when he speaks on earth, it is at all times becoming in all his creatures to hush their rebellious passions, and make the voice of their reason be silent. When God speaks, either from the pulpit or

from his Word, I hold it to be my duty to keep silence. Even while we sing the glories of our God, our soul stands trembling; but when he speaks forth his own glories, who is he that dares to reply? Who is he that shall lift up his voice against the majesty of heaven? There is something so majestic in the voice of God, that when he speaks, it commands silence everywhere, and bids men hear.

But there is something very powerful in the voice of God and that is the reason why it has majesty in it. When God speaks, he speaks not weakly, but with **a voice full of power**. We poor creatures, at times, are clothed by God with that might, and when we speak grace comes pouring from our lips; but there are oftentimes seasons when we meet with small success; we talk and talk, and have not our Master's feet behind us, nor our Master's spirit within us, and therefore but little is done. It is not so with God: he never wasted a word yet; never spoke a solitary word in vain. Whatever he intended he had but to speak and it was accomplished. Once he said, "Let there be light," and instantly light was. So he said in past eternity that Christ should be his first elect, and Christ was his first elect. He decreed our salvation; he spake the word, and it was done. He sent his Son to redeem, and proclaimed to his elect justification in him. And his voice was a powerful voice, for it did justify us. Any other man's voice could not pardon sin, none but the voice of the monarch can speak pardon to the subject; and God's is a majestic voice, for he has only to speak, and our pardon is at once signed, sealed, and ratified. God is not magniloquent in his words; he does not speak big-sounding words, without meaning. The simplest word he utters may have little meaning to man, but it has a power and meaning in it equal to the omnipotence of God. There is a majesty about the voice of God which might suffice to nerve my soul to fight the dragon; to say, "Where is thy boasted victory, death? Where is the monster's sting?" That one promise hath majesty enough in it to make the dwarf a giant, and the weakling one of the mighties of the Most High. It has might enough in it to feed a whole host in the wilderness, to guide a whole company through the mazes of mortal life; majesty enough to divide the Jordan, to open the gates of heaven, and admit the ransomed in. Beloved, I cannot tell you how it is that God's voice is so majestic except from the fact, that he is so mighty himself, and that his words are like him.

But just one thought more concerning the voice of God being essentially majestic; and I must trouble you to remember that, if you forget everything else that I have said. In some sense **Jesus Christ may be called the voice of God, for you know he is called the Word of God frequently in Scripture**, and I am sure this Word of God is full of majesty. The voice and the word are very much the same thing. God speaks: it is his Son. His Son is the Word, the Word is his Son, and the voice is his Son. Ah! truly the voice, the Word of God, "is full of majesty." Angels! ye can tell what majesty sublime invested his blest person when he reigned at his

Father's right hand, ye can tell what were the brightnesses which he laid aside to become incarnate, ye can tell how sparkling was that crown, how mighty was that scepter, how glorious were those robes bedecked with stars. Spirits! ye who saw him when he stripped himself of all his glories, ye can tell what was his majesty. And oh! ye glorified, ye who saw him ascend up on high, leading captivity captive—ye beloved songsters who bow before him, and unceasingly sing his love! ye can tell how full of majesty he is. High above all principalities and powers ye see him sit, angels are but servants at his feet, and the mightiest monarchs like creeping worms beneath his throne. High there, where God alone reigns, beyond the ken of angels or the gaze of immortal spirits—there he sits, not majestic merely, but full of majesty. *Christian! adore your Savior; adore the Son of God; reverence him, and remember at all seasons and times, how little so ever you may be, your Savior, with whom you are allied, the Word of God, is essentially full of majesty.*

## II. Constantly Full

Now the second point. IT IS CONSTANTLY FULL OF MAJESTY. God's voice, like man's voice, has its various tones and degrees of loudness; but it is full of majesty constantly so—whatever tone he uses, it is always full of majesty. Sometimes God speaks to man with a harsh voice, threatening him for sin; and then there is majesty in that harshness. When man is angry with his fellows, and he speaks harshly and severely, there is little majesty in that. But when the just God is angry with sinful mortals, and he says, "I will by no means spare the guilty;" "I, the Lord, am a jealous God;" when he declares himself to be exceedingly wroth, and asks who can stand before the fury of his countenance—when the rocks are cast down by him—there is a majesty in that terrific voice of his.

Then he adopts another voice. Sometimes it is a gentle didactic voice, teaching us what he would have us learn. And then how full of majesty it is! He explains, he expounds, he declares: he tells us what we are to believe; and what a majesty there is in his voice then! Men may explain God's Word, and have no majesty in what they say; but when God teaches what his people are to hold to be truth, what majesty there is in it! So much majesty, that if any man take away from the words that are written in this Book, God shall take away his name out of the book of life and out of the holy city—so much majesty, that to seek to mend the Bible is a proof of a blasphemous heart, that to seek to alter one word of Scripture is a proof of alienation from the God of Israel.

At another time God uses another voice—a sweet consoling voice. And oh! ye mourners that have ever heard God's comforting voice, is not that full of majesty! There is nothing of the mere trifling, that sometimes we employ to comfort poor sick souls. Mothers will often talk to those who are sick in some gentle strain; but somehow it appears to be affected, and is, therefore, not full of majesty; but when God speaks to comfort, he uses his majestic words. "The mountains shall depart,

and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed," saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee.

Oh! is there not majesty in this sweet voice? "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I never forget thee." How sweet, but yet how majestic! We cannot avoid being comforted by it if God speaks it to our souls. Sometimes God's voice is a reproofing voice; and then it is full of majesty. "The ox knoweth his owner," he says, "and the ass his master's crib; but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider;" and he speaks reproofingly, as if he had a controversy with them, and calls the mountains and the hills to hear his reproof of them on account of sin; "I have nourished and brought up children, but they have rebelled against me." But God's reproofing voice is always full of majesty. At other times it is a voice of command to his children, when he appears to them and says, "Speak to the children of Israel that they go forward," And how majestic are God's commands, how mighty is his voice, when he tells us what to do! Some of you have a very poor estimation of what God's voice is. God tells you to be baptized in honor of your Lord and Master; he speaks to you, and he tells you to come round his table, and to remember his dying sufferings; but you do not think much of it; it seems to be lost upon you. But let me tell you, that God's voice of command is as full of majesty, and ought to be as much regarded by his people as his word of promise or his word of doctrine. Whenever he speaks there is a majesty about his voice, whatever tone he may adopt.

Ah! beloved, and there are times coming when God will speak words which will be evidently full of majesty—when he will speak and say, "Arise, ye dead, and come to judgment." There will be majesty in that voice; for Hades shall then be unlocked, and the gates of the grave sawn in twain; the spirits of the dead shall again be clothed with flesh, and the dry bones shall be made alive once more. And he will speak by-and-bye, and summon all men to stand before his bar; and there will be majesty in his voice then, when he shall say, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you;" and oh! dread thought, there will be tremendous majesty in his voice, when he shall exclaim, "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."

Again. God's voice is full of majesty in all the different degrees of its loudness. Even in calling there is a difference in the loudness of God's voice; many of you were called gently to Christ, and you did not seem to hear the thunders of Sinai, like many of God's people; but whether the voice be loud or soft, it is always full of majesty.

And in all its mediums it is full of majesty. God has sometimes chosen the poor to speak his wisdom by. If I go and hear a countryman or an untaught man



preach, who makes many mistakes in grammar, yet if it is God's word that he preaches, it "is full of majesty." And sometimes, when a little child has repeated a text, we have not noticed the child, by reason of the majesty of the voice. In fact, the meaner the instrument employed, the greater the majesty in the voice itself. I have noticed a tendency in many to despise their poorer brethren, members of smaller churches, where there is a more humble minister than one they are in the habit of hearing; but this is all wrong, for God's voice is full of majesty, and he can as well speak by one as the other.

### III. Efficaciously Full

In the last place, I must briefly refer to the majesty of God's voice WHEN IT IS REVEALED IN ITS EFFECTS—when it is spoken home to the heart of man. Just look at the Psalm, and let me briefly refer to the facts here mentioned. I shall not understand them naturally, though, doubtless, they were so intended by David, but I shall understand them spiritually. As Dr. Hawker remarks, "Doubtless they were intended to set out gracious operations, as well as natural ones."

First, the voice of the Lord is a **breaking voice**. "The voice of the Lord breaketh the cedars." The proudest and most stubborn sinner is broken before him when he speaks. I believe that even the spirit of Voltaire, stubborn as that spirit was, and hard as a millstone, would have been broken in a single instant, if God had but spoken to him; the hardest heart I have here needs only one syllable from God to break it in a moment. I might hammer away to all eternity, but I could not do it; but "the voice of the Lord breaketh the cedars of Lebanon."

In the next place, it is a moving voice, an **overcoming voice**. "He maketh them also to skip like a calf; Lebanon and Sirion like a young unicorn." Who would ever think of a mountain moving? It stands so fast and firm. But God's voice, like his voice in Zerubbabel, speaks to the mountain, and says. "Who art thou, great mountain? Before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain." There is not a mountain standing in this world that God cannot move away by his voice, whether it be the mountains of Rome, or the mountains of the false prophet, or the mountains of colossal systems of heresy, or infidelity, or idolatry. God has only to speak the word, and the idols shall fall from their thrones, and the firm mountains of prostrated shall skip like a calf.

In the next place, the voice of God is a **dividing voice**. "The voice of the Lord divides the flames of fire;" or, as it should be, "The voice of the Lord cutteth out with flames of fire." You saw the lightning on Friday, and you remarked then, when God's voice was heard, that the flash seemed to part the cloud and divide the sky. Just so with God's word. Where God's word is faithfully preached, and his voice is spiritually heard, it is always a dividing voice. You bring all kinds of different characters into a chapel, and God's word splits them all in twain. It is in this place God divides you. The son of God holds his throne, and sits in judgment

here. It divides men from men; it divides sinners from their sins; it divides sinners from their righteousness; it splits through clouds and darkness; it divides our troubles, breaks a way for us to heaven. In fact, there is nothing that the voice of God cannot divide. It is a dividing voice.

And then, again, the voice of the Lord is such a **loud voice**, that it is said to shake the wilderness. "The Lord shaketh the wilderness of Kadesh." Stand in the middle of a wilderness or a desert, and conceive if you would make anything hear; but when God speaks, his voice ringeth through the wilderness, and startleth the desert itself. Minister of God! you have only to speak God's voice, and you will be heard; if you have only half-a-dozen to hear you, you will be heard further than you know of. None of us can preach a gospel sermon, but it is heard and talked of more than we imagine. Yea, there is not a pious conversation with a poor woman but may be carried all over the world, and produce the most wonderful effects. Nobody can tell how loud is God's voice, and how far it may be heard. "Lift up thy voice; lift it up; be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God." And your voice may be ever so weak, and your ability ever so little: only lift it up, and God Almighty, by his grace, may make the very wilderness to shake, yea, he may make the very wilderness of Kadesh to tremble.

And then in the 9th verse there is another idea, which I must not pass over, although I might have preferred to do so, possibly. "The voice of the Lord maketh the hinds to calve." By this I understand what the ancients believed—that so affrighted were the hinds by the noise of the thunder, that the period of calving was often hastened on, and frequently prematurely. It is just so with God's voice. If a man has in him a desire towards Christ, the voice of God makes him bring forth that desire, to the joy and rejoicing of his soul. And very frequently, when a man has a bad design towards God, God has only to speak, and his design becomes abortive. It is brought forth, as it were, before its time, and falls like an untimely fruit to the ground. Whatever man has within him, God can make it come out of him in a single moment: if he has a desire towards God, God can bring forth that desire, and he can bring forth the soul, and make it live; and if it be a desire against God, God can frustrate that desire, kill it, overwhelm it, and overthrow it; for "the voice of the Lord maketh the hinds to calve."

And in the next place, the voice of God is a **discovering voice**. It "discovereth the forests." The trees were your former hiding-place; but in the forest, however thick it may be, there doth the lightning gleam; and under the mighty trees, however thick their covering, the voice of the Lord is heard. God's voice is a discovering voice. You hypocrites! you get hiding yourselves under the trees of the forest; but God's voice thundereth after you when it speaks. Some of you get hiding under ceremonies, good lives, resolutions, and hopes; but God's voice will discover the forests; and recollect, there will be a day with some of you, when you will hide

yourselves, or seek to do it, under rocks and mountains, or in the deepest parts of the forests, but when he sits upon his throne, the voice of the Lord will discover the forests. Ye may stand under the old oak, or creep within its trunk, and feel that there you are hidden; but his eyes like balls of fire, shall see you through and through, and his voice, like a voice of thunder, shall say, “Come forth, culprit; come forth, man; I can see thee;

*‘Mine eye can pierce the shades, and find thy soul as soon  
In midnight’s darkness as in blazing noon.’*

Come forth, come forth!” And vain then will be thy disguises, vain thy subterfuges. “The voice of the Lord discovereth the forests.” Oh! I would to God that he would speak to some of you this morning, and discover your souls! I wish he would discover to you your lost and hopeless condition, that you are damned without Christ every one of you! Oh that he would discover to you how horrible is your position considered apart from the Savior; discover to you the fallacy of all your legal hope, and of all your experiences, if they are not experiences allied to Christ! I pray that he would discover to you that all your good works will come tumbling on your head at last, if you build them for a house, and that you must stand surrounded by no covering, but unveiled before the God who discovers the forests.

I would have preached to you this morning, but I cannot. Yet, perhaps, amidst the multitude of my words there may be some still small voice of God, which shall reach your heart. And if the rest of you should despise it, what of that? The voice of God will be as full of majesty in the reprobate as in the elect; and if ye be cast away into hell, God shall get as much glory from the voice which ye heard and which ye despised, as he does from his voice which the elect heard, and at which they trembled and fled to God. Do not think that your damnation will rob God of any of his honor. Why, sirs, he can be as much glorified in your destruction as in your salvation. You are but little creatures in the account of his glory. He can magnify himself anyhow. Oh! humble yourselves, therefore, before God; bow down yourselves before his love and his mercy, and hear now what the plan of salvation is, whereby God brings out his elect. It is this: “*He that believeth,*” in that voice, that Word, that Son of his, “*He that believeth,*”—not he that heareth; “*He that believeth,*”—not he that talketh; “*He that believeth,*”—not merely he that hopeth. “*He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned.*” Ah! hearers, if I could leap out of my body, and could lay aside the infirmities of my spirit, methinks that then I might preach to you; but I know right well that even then it must be God that speaks; and therefore I leave the words. *My God! My God! Save these my people; for Jesus’ precious name’s sake.* —Amen and Amen.

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**Charles H. Spurgeon** (1834-1892): Influential Baptist minister in England. History's most widely read preacher (apart from those found in Scripture). Today, there is available more material written by Spurgeon than by any other Christian author, living or dead. Born at Kelvedon, Essex.



“Be silent, O all flesh, before the LORD: for he is raised up out of his holy habitation” (Zec 2:13).

“Enter into the rock, and hide thee in the dust, for fear of the LORD, and for the glory of his majesty” (Isa 2:10).

“To the only wise God our Saviour, [be] glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen” (Jude 1:25).

“I will speak of the glorious honour of thy majesty, and of thy wondrous works” (Psa 145:5).

# THE PLEASURES OF GOD IN HIS CREATION

John Piper

**I** LOVE the picture that God paints for Job when he is interrogating Job about creation. In Job 38:4-7, God queries, “Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding. Who determined its measurements—surely you know! Or who stretched the line upon it? On what were its bases sunk, or who laid its cornerstone, when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God (angels) shouted for joy.”

Do you see the picture? No man was there. So Job should humble himself and realize there are a few things he (and we!) may not understand. But in making this point God cannot resist, it seems, mentioning what the mood of heaven was like at the moment of creation. “All the sons of God shouted for joy” All the angels had evidently been created before the universe. And it is not hard to see why. God meant there to be an audience when he created the world. I am sure he said, “Watch this!” when he spoke the galaxies into existence. Imagine the awe and wonder that exploded among the angels. They had never seen or even imagined matter. They are all “ministering spirits” (Heb 1:14) and have no material bodies as we do. When God brought material stuff into existence with all its incredible variety and utterly unheard of qualities of sight and sound and smell and touch and taste, this was totally unknown to the angels. God had made it all up. It was not like the unveiling of a new painting made of all the colors and paints we are all familiar with. It was absolutely, totally, unimaginably new! And the response of the sons of God was to shout for joy.

Now I admit that God does not say explicitly in this text that he himself shouted for joy. But do you suppose that God sat by with a blank face and no emotion, while millions of holy angels shouted for joy over his creation? Something would be very out of sync in heaven if that were true. I think God told Job about the joy of the “sons of God” because sons get their dispositions from their Father. If the finite sons were shouting for joy over the greatness and wonder of the Father's creation, you can be sure that the Father's delight both in the creation and in the sons' joy was immense.

Now the question is, why? Why does God have pleasure in his creation?

Unless we know why God has pleasure in creation we will not be able to draw any clear conclusions about what this pleasure implies about God's worth and excellence.

I will try to sum up my answer to this question in five statements based mainly on Psalm 104 as well as some other parts of Scripture. These five statements about why God delights in his creation are not really five separate reasons, because they overlap so much. But they each express a little differently the basic reason. It helps to appreciate the true beauty of a precious stone when you turn it in the light and look at it from different angles.

### **What Day and Night Proclaim**

First, God rejoices in his works because his works express his glory. I see this first in Psalms 104:31.

*May the glory of the Lord endure for ever;  
May the Lord rejoice in his works.*

What these two lines show is that God enjoys his works because they express his glory. In other words, the two halves of this verse are related something like this: "As long as the glory of the Lord endures in his works, God will indeed rejoice in his works." Or you could say, "May the glory of the Lord endure for ever, so that the Lord may rejoice in his works."

I find this idea confirmed in Psalms 19:1-2:

*The heavens are telling the glory of God;  
and the firmament proclaims his handiwork.  
Day to day pours forth speech,  
and night to night declares knowledge.*

It is clear that there is one main message creation has to communicate to human beings, namely, the glory of God. Not primarily the glory of creation, but the glory of God. The glory of creation and the glory of God are as different as the love poem and the love, the painting and the landscape, the ring and the marriage. It would be a great folly and a great tragedy if a man loved his wedding band more than he loved his bride. But that is what Romans 1:19-23 says has happened. Human beings have fallen in love with the echo of God's excellency in creation and lost the ability to hear the incomparable original shout of love.

"What can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. Ever since the creation of the world his invisible nature, namely, his eternal power and deity, has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse; for although they knew God they did not glorify him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking and their senseless minds were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and ex-

changed the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man or birds or animals or reptiles” (Rom 1:19-23).<sup>1</sup>

The message of creation is this: there is a great God of glory and power and generosity behind all this awesome universe; you belong to him; he is patient with you in sustaining your rebellious life; turn and bank your hope on him and delight yourself in him, not his handiwork. Day pours forth the “speech” of that message to all that will listen in the day, speaking with blindingly bright sun and blue sky and clouds and untold shapes and colors of all things visible. Night pours forth the “knowledge” of the same message to all who will listen at night, speaking with great dark voids and summer moons and countless stars and strange sounds and cool breezes and northern lights. Day and night are saying one thing: God is glorious! God is glorious! God is glorious!

This is the most basic reason that God delights in his creation. In creation he sees the reflection of his own glory. This is why he is not an idolater when he has pleasure in the work of his hands.

### **Creation and Christ**

But what about the Son of God? Does this mean that the creation is in competition with the Son for the affection of the Father? Remember that the Son too is called the radiance of God’s glory (Heb 1:3). Does God delight partly in the Son and partly in the creation? Does the creation rob the Son of any of the Father’s delight? Should the Son be jealous of the creation?

No. Before creation the Father and the Son rejoiced in each other with overflowing satisfaction. When the time came for creation, the Bible says that both the Father and the Son were active in the work of creation. The Father had not wearied of the Son and decided to create another enjoyment to make up for his disappointment with the Son. This is plain from Scripture:

“For us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.” (1Co 8:6)

“By [Christ] all things were created.” (Col 1:16)

“In these last days [God] has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. (Heb 1:2)

“In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God. All things were made through him and without him was not anything made that was made.” (Joh 1:1, 3)

In other words, the work of creation is not merely the work of the Father as though he had to satisfy a need that the Son couldn’t meet. Nor was creation

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<sup>1</sup> All Scripture translations in this article are the author’s own from the original languages.

merely the work of the Son as though he had to satisfy some need that the Father couldn't meet. Instead it was the work of both of them together. And the impulse was not deficiency of delight but a spilling over of mutual joy. Jonathan Edwards expresses it like this: "Surely it is no argument of the emptiness or deficiency of a fountain, that it is inclined to overflow." If someone should ask whether God was less happy before the Father and the Son released their joyful creative energy, Edwards answers, "Though these communications of God [in creation]—these exercises, operations, and expressions of his glorious perfections, which God rejoices in—are in time; yet his joy in them is without beginning or change. They were always equally present in the divine mind."

So when the Bible teaches that creation expresses the glory of God, we must not think merely of the glory of the Father or the glory of the Son, but rather the glory that they have together. And the glory that they have together is that overflowing mutual joy in each other's perfections. So creation is an expression of the overflow of that life and joy that the Father and the Son have in each other. There is no competition or jealousy in the Godhead. The Son and Father are equally glorified in creation, because creation is the overflow of gladness that they have in each other.

So the first and most basic statement we can make about why God rejoices in his work of creation is that creation is an expression of his glory.

### **No Humans Hear the Praise of the Deeps**

Second, God rejoices in the works of creation because they praise him. In Psalm 148, the psalmist calls on creation itself to praise the Lord:

*Praise him, sun and moon, praise him, all you shining stars!  
Praise him, you highest heavens, and you waters above the heavens!  
Let them praise the name of the Lord! For he commanded  
and they were created...Praise the Lord from the earth,  
you sea monsters and all deeps (verses 3-5, 7).*

Again in Psalm 103:22 David cries out,

*Bless the Lord, all his works, In all places of his dominion.*

What does this mean? We might say that sun and moon and stars praise God by testifying to us about God. That would be true, as we have just seen (Rom 1:19-23). But what about Psalm 148:7? "Praise the Lord you sea monsters and all deeps!" What human is in the deeps to hear this praise?

One of my favorite poems is "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard," written by Thomas Gray in 1751. One of the stanzas says,

*Full many a gem of purest ray serene,  
The dark unfathomed caves of ocean bear:*



*Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,  
And waste its sweetness on the desert air.*

Gray had been moved by the thought that on the bottom of the ocean there were beautiful gems that no human eye would ever see, and that in distant deserts millions of flowers would bloom, blush with vivid colors, give off a sweet fragrance and never be touched or seen or smelled by anybody but God!

God, it seems, wanted Job to think about this very thing. He asked him, “Have you entered into the springs of the sea, or walked in the recesses of the deep?...Who has cleft a channel for the torrents of rain, and a way for the thunderbolt, to bring rain on a land where no man is, on the desert in which there is no man...Do you know when the mountain goats bring forth? Do you observe the calving of the hinds?” (Job 38:16, 25-26; 39:1) In other words God was claiming that he alone sees the deeps of the ocean and brings rain in the desert where no man is and watches, like a midwife, at the birth of every mountain goat and wild deer.

This is what moves the psalmist in Psalm 148:7, “Praise the Lord you sea monsters and all deeps!” He doesn’t even know what is in all the deeps of the sea! So the praise of the deeps is not merely what they can testify to man. Creation praises God by simply being what it was created to be in all its incredible variety. And since most of the creation is beyond the awareness of mankind (in the reaches of space, and in the heights of mountains and at the bottom of the sea) it wasn’t created merely to serve purposes that have to do with us. It was created for the enjoyment of God.

### **Ranger Rick Is a Theological Journal**

I have a confession to make. Ranger Rick is one of my favorite magazines. When it arrives in our house with the address, “Piper Boys,” I am one of the first Piper boys to take it to the couch. The reason is simple: in spite of its utterly unwarranted and unnecessary evolutionary bias, it inspires more praise in me than most other journals. It is a monthly record of man’s discovery of incredible phenomena in nature that up till recently have only been enjoyed by God for thousands of years.

For example, I read about the European water spider that lives at the bottom of a lake, but breathes air. It comes to the top of the water, does a somersault on the surface and catches a bubble of air. Then it holds the bubble over the breathing holes in the middle of its body while it swims to the bottom of the lake and spins a silk web among the seaweed. It goes up and brings down bubble after bubble until a little balloon of air is formed under its silk web where it can live and eat and mate. When I read that, there was a moment of worship on our living room couch. Doesn’t that make you want to shout, “O Lord, how manifold are your works! In wisdom you have made them all; the earth is full of your creatures” (Psa 104:24)?

I sit there with my mouth open and I think God smiles and says, “Yes, John, and I have been enjoying that little piece of art since before the days of Abraham. And if you only knew how many millions of other wonders there are beyond your sight that I behold with gladness every day!”

Consider sea monsters that we virtually never see. Psalms 104:25-26 says, “Yonder is the sea, great and wide, which teems with things innumerable, living things both small and great.

There go the ships, and Leviathan which you formed to sport in it.”

Why did God create great sea monsters? Just to play, to frolic in the ocean where no man can see, but only God. The teeming ocean declares the glory of God, and praises him a thousand miles from any human eye. That’s the second reason God rejoices in his works.

### **Wisdom beyond Comprehension**

Third, God rejoices in the works of creation because they reveal his incomparable wisdom: This is the point of Psalm 104:24.

*O Lord, how manifold are your works! In wisdom you have made them all; the earth is full of your creatures.*

“In wisdom you have made them all!” In other words the Lord delights in the expressions of his wisdom. This universe is a masterpiece of wisdom and order. Or if you just take a part of it, like the human body—what an amazing work of knowledge and wisdom! Who can fathom the human brain and the mystery of how mind and body work together? Whether you look near or far, whether you look for bigness or smallness, the wonders of nature stagger the mind with the wisdom woven through it all.

Did you know that there are ten thousand known species of diatoms? In a teaspoon of ordinary lake water there may be a million of these tiny invisible plants. And what are they doing while entertaining God with their microscopic beauty? (I know they are beautiful because Ranger Rick had magnified color photographs!) What are they doing? They are making tons and tons of oxygen so that the animals in the water can breathe! The world is full of the wisdom of God!

*O Lord, how manifold are your works!  
In wisdom you have made them all.*

[The psalmist marveled at how everything works together so wisely.]

*You cause the grass to grow for the cattle,  
and plants for man to cultivate,  
that he may bring forth food from the earth. (Psa 104:14)*

What a wonderful experience it is when God grants us a moment in which we don’t take anything for granted, but see the world as though it was invented yesterday. How we would marvel at the wisdom of God. We should pray for the eyes

of children again, when they saw everything for the first time. William Quayle reminded me of this recently in his lively book, *The Pastor Preacher*. He said, “A cow has pretty eyes, as quiet as a pool of quiet water, but uneventful eyes. There is no touch of wonder in their dreamless depths. The eyes are therefore soulless. A child’s eyes are fairly lightning. They are to see things: they are the windows of the brain, and bewilder like a play of swords of fire.” These are the eyes we need to see the unending wisdom of God running through all the world. There will be no exhausting the understanding of God. We will be making new discoveries for all eternity.

*The Lord is the everlasting God,  
the Creator of the ends of the earth,  
He does not faint or grow weary,  
his understanding is unsearchable (Isa 40:28).*

### **Power without Equal**

Fourth, God rejoices in the works of creation because they reveal his incomparable power. In Isaiah 40:26 Isaiah looks up at the star-filled sky—perhaps on a night like I remember on a mountain in Utah in September 1968, when the sky was literally a sheet of light, and star could not be distinguished from star—he looks up and says,

*Lift up your eyes on high and see: who created these?  
He who brings out their host by number, calling them all by name;  
by the greatness of his might, and because he is strong in power  
not one is missing.*

If Isaiah was stunned at the power of God to create and name and sustain every star in the heaven that he could see, what would be his worship today if he were shown that the nearest of those stars in his sky, Alpha Centauri and Proxima Centauri are twenty-five million million miles away? And what would be his worship if he knew that what he was seeing in his night sky was a tiny patch of our galaxy which has in it a hundred billion stars, and that beyond our galaxy there are millions of galaxies?

It seems in these days that God is enjoying keeping the astronomers on the edge of their seats with new glimpses of his power. In the fall of 1989, newspapers reported the discovery by two Harvard astronomers of a “Great Wall” of galaxies stretching hundreds of millions of light years across the known universe. The wall is supposedly some five hundred million light years long, two hundred million light years wide and fifteen million light years thick. In case your high school astronomy has grown fuzzy, a light year is a little less than six trillion (6,000,000,000,000) miles. This Great Wall consists of more than fifteen thousand galaxies, each with millions of stars, and was described as the “largest single coherent structure seen so far in nature.”

I say “was described” because three months later in February 1990, God opened another little window for tiny man to marvel again, and the newspapers reported that astronomers have discovered more than a dozen evenly distributed clumps of galaxies stretching across vast expanses of the heavens, suggesting a structure to the universe that is so regular and immense that it defies current theories of cosmic origins. The newly found pattern of galactic matter dwarfs the extremely long sheet of galaxies, dubbed the “great wall” (now written without caps!), that was reported in November 1989 to be the largest structure in the universe. They now say the great wall is, in fact, merely one of the closest of these clumps, or regions, that contain very high concentrations of galaxies.

What is this universe but the lavish demonstration of the incredible, incomparable, unimaginable exuberance and wisdom and power and greatness of God! What a God he must be!

### **God and God Alone**

Fifth, God rejoices in the works of creation because they point us beyond themselves to God himself. God means for us to be stunned and awed by his work of creation. But not for its own sake. He means for us to look at his creation and say: If the mere work of his fingers (just his fingers! Psa 8:3) is so full of wisdom and power and grandeur and majesty and beauty, what must this God be like in himself!

These are but the backside of his glory, as it were, darkly seen through a glass. What will it be to see the Creator himself? Not his works! A billion galaxies will not satisfy the human soul. God and God alone is the soul’s end. Jonathan Edwards expressed it like this: “The enjoyment of God is the only happiness with which our souls can be satisfied. To go to heaven, fully to enjoy God, is infinitely better than the most pleasant accommodations here...[These] are but shadows; but God is the substance. These are but scattered beams; but God is the sun. These are but streams; but God is the ocean.”

This is why Psalm 104 comes to a close like this with a focus on God himself: “May the glory of the Lord endure for ever, may the Lord rejoice in his works, who looks on the earth and it trembles, who touches the mountains and they smoke! I will sing to the Lord as long as I live; I will sing praise to my God while I have being. May my meditation be pleasing to him, for I rejoice in the Lord” (vv. 31-34).

In the end it will not be the seas or the mountains or the canyons or the water spiders or the clouds or the great galaxies that fill our hearts to breaking with wonder and fill our mouths with eternal praise. It will be God himself. This is why God has pleasure in his creation. It is the overflow of the satisfaction that

God the Father and God the Son have in each other, and therefore the revelation and proclamation of God's glory day and night.

Taken from "*The Pleasures of God*," pages 84-95, Multnomah Press. Used by permission.

# THE RIGHTEOUS MAN'S REFUGE

John Flavel (1630-1691)

*“Come my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast”*

—Isaiah 26:20.

**L**ET us therefore view our chambers, and see how well God hath provided for his children in all the distresses that befall them in this world; it is our Father's voice that calls to us, *Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers.* And the Chamber which comes to be opened as a refuge to distressed believers in a stormy day, is that most secure and safe attribute of *Divine Power*: into this let us first enter by serious and believing meditation, and see how safe they are whom God hides under the protection thereof, in the worst and most dangerous days. In opening this attribute, we shall consider it,

1. *In its own nature and properties.*
2. *In the extent of its operations.*
3. *With respect to the promises.*
4. *As it is actuated by providence in the behalf of distressed saints.*

And then give you a comfortable prospect of their safe and happy condition, who take up their lodgings by faith in this attribute of God.

1. *Let us consider the power of God in itself,* and we shall find it represented to us in the scriptures, in these three lovely properties, viz.

1. *Omnipotent*
2. *Supreme*
3. *Everlasting*

1. *As an omnipotent and all-sufficient power,* which hath no bounds or limits but the pleasure and will of God, (Dan 4:34,35). “He doth according to his will in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth, and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What dost thou?” So “Whatsoever the Lord pleased that did he, in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and in all deep places”(Psa 135:6). You see Divine pleasure is the only rule according to which Divine Power exerts itself in the world; we are not therefore to limit and restrain it in our narrow and shallow thoughts, and to think in this, or in that, the power of God may help or secure us; but to believe that he is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think. Thus those worthies, (Dan 3:17) by faith exalted the power of God above the order and common rule of second causes. “Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king.” Their faith resting itself upon the omnipotent power of God, expected deliverance from it in an extraordinary way; it is true, this is no standing

rule for our faith ordinarily to work by; nor have we ground to expect such miraculous salvations, but yet when extraordinary difficulties press us, and the common ways and means of deliverance are shut up, we ought by faith to exalt the omnipotency of God, by ascribing the glory thereof to him, and leave ourselves to his good pleasure, without straitening or narrowing his Almighty Power, according to the mould of our poor low thoughts and apprehensions of it: for so the Lord himself directeth our faith in difficult cases, “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord; for as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts”(Isa 55:8-9). He speaks there of his pardoning mercy, which he will not have his people to contract and limit according to the model and platform of their own desponding, misgiving, and unbelieving thoughts; but to exalt and glorify it, according to its unbounded fulness; as it is in the thoughts of God, the fountain of that mercy; so it ought to be with respect to his power, about which his thoughts and ours do vastly differ; the power of God as we cast in the mould of our thoughts, is as vastly different and disproportionate from what it is in the thoughts of God the fountain thereof, as the earth is to the heavens, which is but a small inconsiderable point compared with them.

2. *The power of God is a supreme and sovereign power*, from which all creature-power is derived, and by which it is over-ruled, restrained, and limited at his pleasure. Nebuchadnezzar was a great monarch, he ruled over other kings, yet he held his kingdom from God; it was God that placed not only the crown upon his head, but his head upon his shoulders, “Thou, O king, art a king of kings; for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory”(Dan 2:37). **Hence it follows, that no creature can move tongue or hand against any of God’s people, but by virtue of a commission or permission from their God**, albeit they think not so. Knowest thou not, saith Pilate unto Christ, that I have power to crucify thee, and power to release thee? Proud worm! what an ignorant and insolent boast was this of his own power! and how doth Christ spoil and shame it in his answer? “Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above” (Joh 19:11).

Wicked men, like wild horses, would run over and trample under foot all the people of God in the world, were it not that the bridle of Divine Providence had a strong curb to restrain them: “The princes of Israel every one were in thee, to their power to shed blood” (Eze 22:6). And it was well for God’s Israel that their power was not as large as their wills were; this world is a raging and boisterous sea, which sorely tosses the passengers for heaven that sail upon it, but this is their comfort and security: The Lord “stilleth the noise of the seas, the noise of the waves, and the tumult of the people” (Psa 65:7). Moral, as well as natural waves, are checked and bounded by divine power. “Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath thou shalt restrain” (Psa 76:10). As a man

turns so much water into the channel as will drive the mill, and turns away the rest into another sluice.

Yea, not only the power of man, but the power of devils also is under the restraint and limitation of this power, "the devil shall cast some of you into prison...and ye shall have tribulation ten days" (Rev 2:10). He would have cast them into their graves, yea, into hell if he could, but it must be only into a prison: He would have kept them in prison till they had died and rotted there, but it must be only for ten days. **Oh glorious sovereign power! which thus keeps the reins of government in its own hand!**

3. *The power of God is an everlasting power*; time doth not weaken or diminish it, as it doth all creature-powers, "The Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary," (Isa 40:28). "The Lord's hand is not shortened," (Isa 59:1). He hath as much power now as ever he had, and can do for his people as much as ever he did; time will decay the power of the strongest creature, and make him faint and feeble; but the Creator of the ends of the earth fainteth not. "But thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end" (Ps 102:27). In God's working there is no expense of his strength, he is able to do as much for his church now as ever he did, to act over-again all the glorious deliverances that ever he wrought for his people from the beginning of the world; to do as much for his church now, as he did at the Red-sea; and upon this ground the church builds its plea, "Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord, awake as in the ancient days, as in the generations of old. Art thou not it that hath cut Rahab, and wounded the dragon?" (Isa 51:9-10). Lord, why should not thy people at this day expect as glorious productions of thy power, as any of them found in former ages?

2. *Let us view the power of God in the vast extent of its operations*, and then you will find it working beyond the line, 1. Of creature-power, 2. Of creature-expectation, 3. Of human probability.

1. *Beyond the line of all created power*, even upon the hearts, thoughts, and minds of men, where no creature hath any jurisdiction. So God bound up the spirit of Laban, and becalmed it towards Jacob (Gen 31:29). So "He made them also to be pitied of all them that carried them captives" (Psa 106:46). Thus the Lord promised Jeremiah, "I will cause the enemy to entreat thee well, in the time of evil" (Jer 15:11). This power of God softens the hearts of the most fierce and cruel enemies, and sweetens the spirits of the most bitter and enraged foes of his people.

2. *Beyond the line of all creature-expectations*, God "is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think" (Eph 3:20). He doth so in spirituals; as appears by those two famous parables, "And am no more worthy to be called thy son; make me as one of thy hired servants. But the Father said to his servants, bring forth the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet" (Luk 15:19,22). The prodigal desired to be but as an hired servant, and lo, the fatted calf is killed for him, and music to his meat; and the gold ring



upon his finger. And in Matthew 18:26-27 the debtor did but desire patience, and the creditor forgave the debt. Oh! thinks a poor humbled sinner, if I might have but the least glimpse of hope, how sweet would it be! But God brings him to more than he expects, even the clear shining of assurance. It is so in temporals, the church confesses the Lord did things they looked not for (Isa 64:3). And in both spirituals and temporals this power moves in an higher orb than our thoughts, "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways...For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Isa 55:8-9). The earth is but a speech to the heavens; all its tallest cedars, mountains and pyramids cannot reach it: He speaks, as was said before, of God's pitying, pardoning, and merciful thoughts, and shows that no creature can think of God, as he doth of the creature under sin, or under misery; our thoughts are not his thoughts; either first, by way of simple cogitation we cannot think such thoughts towards others in misery, by way of pity; or under sin against us by way of pardon, as God doth: Nor secondly, are our thoughts as God's in respect of reflexive comprehension; i.e. We cannot conceive or comprehend what those thoughts of God towards us are; when we fall into sin or misery, just as he thinks them, they are altered, debased, and straitened as soon as ever they come into our thoughts. See an excellent instance in "I had not thought to see thy face, and lo, God hath showed me also thy seed" (Gen 48:11). A surprizing providence; and thus the divine power works in a sphere above all the thoughts, prayers, and expectations of men.

3. *It works beyond all probabilities, and rational conjectures of men;* this Almighty power hath created deliverances for the people of God, when things have been brought to the lowest ebb, and all the means of salvation have been hid from their eyes. We have divers famous instances of this in scripture, wherein we may observe a remarkable gradation in the working of this Almighty power. It is said in 2 Kings 14:26-27 "The Lord saw the affliction of Israel, that it was very bitter, for there was not any shut up, or any left, nor any helper for Israel." A deplorable state! How inevitable was their ruin to the eye of sense? Well might it be called a bitter affliction; yet from this immediate power arose for them a sweet and unexpected salvation: And if we look into 2 Corinthians 1:9-10 we shall find the apostles and choicest Christians of those times, giving up themselves as lost men; all ways of escaping being quite out of sight, for so much those words signify, We had the sentence of death in ourselves; i.e. We yielded ourselves for dead men. But though they were sentenced to death, yea, though they sentenced themselves, this power, which wrought above all their thoughts and rational conjectures, reprieved them. And yet one step farther, in Ezekiel 37:4-7 the people of God are there represented as actually dead, yea, as in their graves, yea, as rotted in their graves, and their very bones dry, like those that are dead of old; so utterly improbable was their recovery: Yet by the working of this Almighty power, which subdueth all things to

itself, their graves in Babylon were opened, the breath of life came into them, bone came to bone, and there stood up a very great army; it was the working of his power above the thoughts of man's heart, which gave the ground of that famous proverb, "In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen" (Gen 22:14). And the ground of that famous promise, "At evening time it shall be light" (Zec 14:7). Light shall unexpectedly spring up, when all men according to the course and order of nature, expect nothing but increasing darkness. How extensive is the power of God in its glorious operations!

3. *Let us view the power of God in its relation to the promises*, for so it becomes our sanctuary in the day of trouble; if the power of God be the chamber, it is the promise of God which is that golden key that opens it. And if we will consult the scriptures in this matter, we shall find the Almighty power of God made over to his people by promise, for many excellent ends and uses in the day of their trouble. As,

1. *To uphold and support them when their own strength fails*, "Fear thou not, for I am with thee, be not dismayed, for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee, yea, I will help thee, yea, I will uphold thee, with the right hand of my righteousness" (Isa 41:10). And which of the saints have not sensibly felt these everlasting arms underneath their spirits, when afflictions have pressed them above their own strength! So runs the promise to Paul, in 2 Corinthians 12:9 "My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness;" It is made known in thy weakness. Our weakness adds nothing to God's power, it doth not make his power perfect, but it hath the better advantage of its discovery, and puts forth itself more signally and conspicuously in our weakness; as the stars which never shine so gloriously as in the darkest night.

2. *To preserve them in all their dangers*, to which they lie exposed in soul and body, you, saith the apostle, "are kept by the mighty power of God" (1Pe 1:5). Kept as in a garrison; this is their arm every morning, as it is "O Lord be gracious unto us, we have waited for thee, be thou their arm every morning, our salvation also in the time of trouble" (Isa 33:2). The arm is that member which is fitted for the defense of the body, and for that end so placed by the God of nature, that it may guard every part above and below it; but as good they were bound behind our backs, for any help they can give us in some cases: It is God's arm that defends us and not our own. This invisible power of God makes the saints the world's wonder. "I am as a wonder to many, but thou art my strong refuge" (Psa 71:7). To see the poor defenseless creatures preserved in the midst of furious enemies, that is just matter of wonder; but God being their invisible refuge, that solves the wonder; to this end the power of God is by promise engaged to his people, "I the Lord do keep it, I will water it every moment, lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day" (Isa 27:3). And thus they subsist in the midst of dangers and troubles; as the

burning bush (the emblem of the church) did amidst the devouring flames, (Exo 3:3).

3. *To deliver them out of their distresses*; so runs the promise, “Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him; I will set him on high, because he hath known my name; he shall call upon me, and I will answer him, I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honour him” (Psa 91:14-15). And “Alas for that day is great, so that none is like it: It is even the time of Jacob’s trouble, but ye shall be saved out of it” (Jer 30:7). And surely there can be no distress so great, no case of believers so forlorn, but,

1. *It is easy with God to save them out of it*. Are they to the eye of sense lost, as hopeless as men in the grave? Yet see “O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel” (Eze 37:12). And he doth whatever he doth easily, with a word, “Thou art my king, O God, command deliverances for Jacob” (Psa 44:4). And it requireth no more violent motion to do it, than he that swimmeth in the water uses (Isa 25:11). A gentle easy motion of the hand doth it.

2. *And as the power of God can deliver them easily, so speedily*. Their deliverance is often wrought by way of surprise. “Behold, at evening-tide, trouble, and in the morning he is not” (Isa 17:14). So the church prays, “Turn again our captivity as the streams in the south” (Psa 136:14). The southern countries are dry, the streams there come not in a gentle and slow current, but being occasioned by violent, sudden spouts of rain, they presently overflow the country, and as soon retire. So speedily can the power of God free his people from their dangers and fears.

3. *Yea, such is the excellency of his delivering power, that he can save alone, without any contribution of creature-aids*. So Isaiah 59:16. “He wondered that there was no intercessor; therefore his hand brought salvation unto him, and his righteousness sustained him.” We read indeed, Judges 5:23 of helping the Lord, but that is not to express his need, but their duty; we have continual need of God, but he hath no need of us: he uses instruments, but not out of necessity, his arm alone can save us, be the danger never so great, or the visible means of deliverance never so remote.

4. *Once more, let us view this chamber of Divine Power, as it is continually opened by the hand of providence, to receive and secure the people of God in all their dangers*. It is said, “The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect towards him” (2Ch 16:9). Where you have an excellent account of the immediacy, universality, and efficacy of Divine Providence, as it uses and applies this Divine Power for the guard and defense of that people who are its charge; he doth not only set angels to watch for them, but his own eyes guard them, even those seven eyes of providence mentioned, (Zec 3:9) which never sleep nor slumber; for they are said to run continually to and fro, and that not in this or that particular place only, for the ser-

vice of some more eminent and excellent persons; but through the whole earth. It is an encompassing and surrounding providence which hath its eye upon all whose hearts are upright; all the saints are within the line of its care and protection; the eye of providence discovereth all their dangers, and its arm defends them, for he shews himself strong in their behalf.

The secret, but the almighty efficacy of providence is also excellently described to us in Ezekiel 1:8, where the angels are said to have their hands under their wings, working secretly and undiscernibly, but very effectually for the saints committed to their charge. Like unto which is that in Habbakuk 3:4 where it is said of God, "that he had horns coming out of his hands, and there was the hiding of his power." The hand is the instrument of action, denoting God's active power, and the horns coming out of them are the glorious rays and beams of that power shining forth in the salvation of his people. Oh that we could sun ourselves in those cheerful and reviving beams of Divine Power, by considering how gloriously they have broken forth, and shone out for the salvation of his people in all ages. So it did for Israel at the Red-sea, (Exo 15:6). So for Jehoshaphat in that great strait, (2Ch 20:12, 15). And so in the time of Hezekiah, (2Ki 19:3, 7). Yea, in all ages from the beginning of the world the saints have been sheltered under these wings of Divine Power, (Isa 51:9-10). Thus providence hath hanged and adorned this chamber of Divine Power with the delightful histories of the church's manifold preservations by it.

Having taken a short view of this glorious chamber of God's power, absolutely in itself; and also in relation to his promises and providences, it remains now, that I press and persuade all the people of God under their fears and dangers, according to God's gracious invitation, *to enter into it, shut their doors, and to behold with delight this glorious attribute working for them in all their exigencies and distresses.*

1. *Enter into this chamber of Divine Power, all ye that fear the Lord, and hide yourselves there in those dangerous and distressful days;* let me say to you as the prophet did to the poor distressed Jews, "Turn ye to your strong hold, ye prisoners of hope" (Zec 9:12). Strong holds might they say; why, where are they? The walls of Jerusalem are in the dust, the temple burnt with fire, Sion an heap; what meanest thou in telling us of our strong holds? Why, admit all this, yet there is refuge enough for you in God alone, as Calvin excellently notes upon that place. Christian, art thou not able to fetch a good subsistence for thy soul by faith, out of the Almighty Power of God? The renowned saints of old did so. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob met with as many difficulties and plunges of trouble in their time, as ever you did, or shall meet with; yet, by the exercise of their faith upon this attribute, they lived comfortably, and why cannot you? "I appeared (saith God) unto Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, by the name of God Almighty" (Exo 6:3). They kept house and feasted by faith upon this name of mine; O that we could do as Abraham did, (Rom 4:21). We have the same attribute, but, alas, we have not such a faith as his

was to improve it. It is easy to believe the Almighty power of God in a calm, but not so easy to resign ourselves to it, and securely rest upon it in a storm of adversity; but oh, what peace and rest would our faith procure us by the free use and exercise of it this way! To assist your faith in this difficulty wherein we find the faith of a Moses sometimes staggered, let me briefly offer you these four following encouragements.

a. Consider how your gracious God hath engaged this his Almighty Power, by promise and covenant for the security of his people. God pawned it, as it were, to Abraham, in that famous promise, “I am the Almighty God, walk thou before me, and be thou perfect” (Gen 17:1). And “Fear not, Abraham, I am thy shield” (Gen 15:1). Say not, this was Abraham’s peculiar privilege, for if thou consult Hosea 12:4 and Hebrews 13:5-6 you will find that believers in these days have as good a title to the promises made in those days, as those worthies had to whom they were immediately made.

b. If you be believers, our relation to God strongly engageth his power for you, as well as his own promises, “Surely [saith God] they are my people, children that will not lie: so he was their Saviour” (Isa 63:8). We say relations have the least of entity, but the greatest efficacy; you find it so in your own experience, let a wife, child, or friend be in imminent danger, and it shall engage all the power you have to succour and deliver them.

c. This glorious power of God is engaged for you by the very malice and wickedness of your enemies, who will be apt to impute the ruin of the saints to the defect of power in God; from whence those excellent arguments are drawn, “Now if thou shalt kill all this people as one man, then the nations which have heard the fame of thee, will speak, saying, Because the Lord was not able to bring this people into the land which he sware unto them, therefore he hath slain them in the wilderness” (Num 14:15-16). And again, in Deuteronomy 32:26-27 you will find the Lord improving this argument for them himself; if they do not plead it for themselves, he will. “I would scatter them into corners, I would make the remembrance of them to cease from among men, were it not that I feared the wrath of the enemy, lest their adversaries should behave themselves strangely, and lest they should say, Our hand is high, and the Lord hath not done all this.” O see how much you are beholden to the very rage of your enemies, for your deliverances from them!

d. To conclude, the very reliance of your souls by faith upon the power of God, your very leaning upon his arm engages it for your protection, “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee” (Isa 26:3). Puzzle not yourselves therefore any longer about qualifications: but know that the very acting of your faith on God, the recumbency of your souls upon him, is that which will engage him for your defense, how weak and defective soever thou art in other respects.

2. Having thus entered by faith into this chamber of Divine Power, the next counsel the text gives you, is, to shut the door behind you; i.e. after the acting of your faith, and the quiet repose of your souls upon God's almighty power; then take heed lest unbelieving fears and jealousies creep in again, and disturb the rest of your souls in God; you find a sad instance of this in Moses, (Num 11:21, 23). After so many glorious acts and triumphs of his faith, how were his heels tripped up by diffidence which crept in afterwards! Good men may be posed with difficult providences, and made to stagger. The Israelites had lived upon miracles many years, "Can he give bread also?" (Psa 78:20). Good Martha objects difficulty to Christ, "By this time he stinketh" (Joh 11:39). *Oh! it is a glorious thing to give God the glory of his Almighty Power in difficult cases that we cannot comprehend.* See Zechariah 8:6 "If it be marvellous in the eyes of the remnant of this people in these days, should it be as marvellous in mine eyes? saith the Lord of hosts." Difficulties are for men, but not for God; because it is marvellous in your eyes, must it be so in God's! Various objections will be apt to arise in your hearts to drive you out of this your refuge. As,

*Objection 1.* Oh! but the long continuance of our troubles and distresses will sink our very hearts, "Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, my way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment is passed over from my God" (Isa 40:27).

*Answer* But, oh! wait upon God without fainting, "The vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it, because it will surely come, it will not tarry" (Hab 2:3).

*Objection 2.* Oh, but our former hopes and expectations of deliverance are frustrated, "We looked for peace, but no good came: and for a time of health, and behold trouble" (Jer 8:15).

*Answer* Oh, but yet be not discouraged: see how the Psalmist begins the 69th Psalm with trembling, and ends it with triumph; the husbandman waiteth, and so must you.

*Objection 3.* But there is no sign or appearance of our deliverance.

*Answer* What then, this is no new thing, "We see not our signs, there is no more any prophet, neither is there any among us that knoweth how long" (Psa 74:9).

*Objection 4.* But all things work contrary to our hope.

*Answer* Why, so did things with Abraham; yet see, "Against hope, he believed in hope" (Rom 4:18).

3. *Observe farther with delight, the outgoings and glorious workings of Divine power for you and for the church in times of trouble: this is sweet entertainment for your souls, it is food for faith,* "Thou brakest the heads of Leviathan in pieces, and gavest him to be meat to the people inhabiting the wilderness" (Psa 74:14). And here I beseech you behold and admire,

a. Its mysterious and admirable protection of the saints in all their dangers. They feed as sheep in the midst of wolves, (Luk 10:3). They lie "among them that

are set on fire”; their “habitation is in the midst of deceit”(Psa 57:4; Jer 9:6). Yet they are kept in safety by the mighty power of God.

b. Behold and admire it in casting the bonds of restraint upon your enemies, that though they would, yet they cannot hurt you; our dangers are visible, and our fears great, but our security and safety admirable, “Thou hast feared continually every day, because of the fury of the oppressor, as if he were ready to destroy; and where is the fury of the oppressor?” (Isa 51:13).

c. Behold its opening unexpected and unlikely refuges and securities for the saints in their distresses; “Let mine outcasts dwell with thee, Moab, be thou a covert to them from the face of the spoiler; for the extortioner is at an end, the spoiler ceaseth, the oppressors are consumed out of the land” (Isa 16:4). “The earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth” (Rev 12:16).

d. Behold it frustrating all the designs of our enemies against us, “No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper, and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn” (Isa 54:17). “Behold, I have created the smith,” (Isa 54:16). He that created the smith, can order as he pleaseth the weapon made by him; Hence our enemies are not masters of their own designs.

Oh then, depend upon this power of God, for it is your security; there is a two-fold dependence, the one natural and necessary, the other elective: 1. Natural dependence, so all do, and must depend upon him. 2. Elective and voluntary, and so we all ought to depend upon him; and for your encouragement take this scripture,

*“The Lord also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble, and they that know thy name will put their trust in thee, for thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek thee” (Psa 9:9, 10).*

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**John Flavel** (c. 1630-1691): English Presbyterian and minister at Dartmouth, Devonshire, England. Voluminous writer of Evangelical works such as *The Fountain of Life Opened* and *Keeping the Heart*.



# THE PISTOL STAR AND THE POWER OF GOD

*MEDITATION ON SCIENCE, SIGHT, AND DIVINE SPLendor*

**John Piper**

**I** THANK God for the mind-boggling discoveries of science. It is as though a blind servant should keep bringing gorgeous jewels to the table. Not that all scientists are blind. Or that any of them is totally blind. If they were, I probably would have died of polio or smallpox by now. I would not have electric light, refrigeration, word processing, a combustion engine in my car, instant news on the radio, or flights to Winnipeg (not to mention Mars). Scientists are not dumb and not blind—entirely.

But what word shall I use to describe the eye or the heart that could discover the Pistol Star and not worship God? Or even mention God. Let me catch my breath. There are two breathtaking things in the paper this morning (October 8, 1997). One is the report of the discovery of the largest star ever known. The other is the absence of God. Both of these marvels take my breath away.

The article begins:

Try to imagine a star so big that it would fill all of the solar system within the orbit of Earth, which is 93 million miles from the sun. A star so turbulent that its eruptions would spread a cloud of gases spanning four light-years—the distance from the sun to the nearest star [about 24,000,000,000,000 miles]. A star so powerful that it glows with the energy of 10 million suns, making it the brightest ever observed in our galaxy, the Milky Way. Actually, a star so big and bright should be unimaginable, according to some theories of star formation. But here it is, near the center of the Milky Way. (*Star-Tribune, Minneapolis, MN, 8 October 1997, A4*)

Jesus loved the psalms and believed them to be the Word of God. So I do not doubt that he looked into the night sky and worshiped, “I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars which you have established” (Psa 8:3, RSV). But there is no mention of God in the report of the scientists. There is no worship. Among the “theories of star formation” being exploded by the Pistol Star there is one that will stand unshaken. In fact, it is not a theory but a revealed truth: Stars are “the work of your fingers.” Stars are God’s finger-work. This is what Jesus believed. This is true.



Therefore, when I read that scientists have discovered a new star that is ten million times more powerful than the sun that warms my face from ninety-three million miles away and holds the earth in orbit and burns (in its cooler spots) at six thousand degrees centigrade, I see the fingers of God in a new way. I am moved to tremble and to fall on my face in silence before the greatness of God. And as I come back to some degree of composure, the absence of God in this report stuns me. Is there any other word but “blindness” to describe this? Jesus would say, “The heavens are telling the glory of God and the firmament declares the work of his hands” (Psalm 19:1, author’s translation). Not to see the glory of God in the Pistol Star is to be blind.

Open your eyes. Pray that God would give you eyes to see. Jesus spoke of those who “hearing do not hear” and “seeing do not see” (Mat 13:13). Pray that you would not be among that number. The cosmos exists to help you know God, the Maker. And the main message is that he is very *great* and that we are very small. We need to feel this greatness. We need to be able to say, “Wherefore thou art great, O LORD God: for there is none like thee” (2Sa 7:22 ). “Thy righteousness also, O God, is very high, who hast done great things: O God, who is like unto thee!” (Psa 71:19). “Who is so great a God as our God?” (Psa 77:13). “For thou art great, and doest wondrous things: thou art God alone” (Psa 86:10). “Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty” (Rev 15:3). “Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised” (Psa 48:1). “Bless the LORD, O my soul. O LORD my God, thou art very great; thou art clothed with honour and majesty” (Psa 104:1).

Let us then be doubly stunned as the telescopes bring in the reports of God’s greatness—stunned at the power of God and stunned at the absence of worship.

Taken from “*A Godward Life*,” Vol. 2 page 59, Multnomah Press. Used by Permission.



# MAJESTY COME DOWN

## THE EXTENT OF THE DIVINE CONDESCENSION

Thomas Chalmers (1780-1847)

*“Who is like unto the Lord our God, who dwelleth on high? Who humbleth himself to behold the things that are in heaven, and in the earth?”*

—Psalm 113:5-6.

**W**E have already attempted to lay before you the wonderful extent of that space, teeming with unnumbered worlds, which modern science has brought within the circle of its discoveries. We even ventured to expatiate on those tracts of infinity, which lie on the other side of all that eye or that telescope hath made known to us—to shoot afar into those ulterior regions which are beyond the limits of our astronomy—to impress you with the rashness of the imagination, that the creative energy of God had sunk exhausted by the magnitude of its efforts, at that very line, through which the art of man, lavished as it has been on the work of perfecting the instruments of vision, has not yet been able to penetrate: and upon all this we hazarded the assertion, that though all these visible heavens were to rush into annihilation, and the besom of the Almighty’s wrath were to sweep from the face of the universe, those millions, and millions more of suns and of systems, which lie within the grasp of our actual observation—that this event, which, to our eye, would leave so wide, and so dismal a solitude behind it, might be nothing in the eye of Him who could take in the whole, but the disappearance of a little speck from that field of created things, which the hand of his omnipotence had thrown around him.

But to press home the sentiment of the text, it is not necessary to stretch the imagination beyond the limit of our actual discoveries. It is enough to strike our minds with the insignificance of this world, and of all who inhabit it, to bring it into measurement with that mighty assemblage of worlds, which lie open to the eye of man, aided as it has been by the inventions of his genius. When we told you of the many millions of suns, each occupying his own independent territory in space, and dispensing his own influences over a cluster of tributary worlds; this world could not fail to sink into littleness in the eye of him who looked to all the magnitude and variety which are around it. We gave you but a feeble image of our comparative insignificance, when we said that the glories of an extended forest would suffer no more from the fall of a single leaf, than the glories of this extended universe would suffer, though the globe we tread, “and all that it inherits, should dissolve.” And when we lift our conceptions to Him who has peopled im-

ments with all these wonders—who sits enthroned on the magnificence of his own works, and by one sublime idea can embrace the whole extent of that boundless amplitude, which he has filled with the trophies of his divinity: we cannot but resign our whole heart to the Psalmist's exclamation of "*What is man, that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man, that thou shouldst deign to visit him!*"

Now mark the use to which all this has been turned by the genius of infidelity. Such a humble portion of the universe as ours, could never have been the object of such high and distinguishing attentions as Christianity has assigned to it. God would not have manifested himself in the flesh for the salvation of so paltry a world. The monarch of a whole continent, would never move from his capital, and lay aside the splendour of royalty, and subject himself for months, or for years, to perils, and poverty, and persecution; and take up his abode in some small islet of his dominions, which, though swallowed by an earthquake, could not be missed amid the glories of so wide an empire; and all this to regain the lost affections of a few families upon its surface. And neither would the eternal Son of God—he who is revealed to us as having made all worlds, and as holding an empire, amid the splendours of which the globe that we inherit, is shaded insignificance; neither would he strip himself of the glory he had with the Father before the world was, and light on this lower scene, for the purpose imputed to him in the New Testament. Impossible that the concerns of this puny ball, which floats its little round among an infinity of larger worlds, should be of such mighty account in the plans of the Eternal, or should have given birth in heaven to so wonderful a movement, as the Son of God putting on the form of our degraded species, and sojourning among us, and sharing in all our infirmities, and crowning the whole scene of humiliation by the disgrace and the agonies of a cruel death on the cross.

This has been stated as a difficulty in the way of the Christian Revelation; and it is the boast of many of our philosophical infidels, that by the light of modern discovery, the light of the New Testament is eclipsed and overborne; and the mischief is not confined to philosophers, for the argument has got into other hands, and the popular illustrations that are now given to the sublimest truths of science, have widely disseminated all the deism that has been grafted upon it; and the high tone of a decided contempt for the Gospel, is now associated with the flippancy of superficial acquirements: and, while the venerable Newton, whose genius threw open those mighty fields of contemplation, found a fit exercise for his powers in the interpretation of the Bible, there are thousands and tens of thousands, who, though walking in the light which he holds out to them, are seduced by a complacency which he never felt, and inflated by a pride which never entered into his pious and philosophical bosom, and whose only notice of the Bible, is to depreciate, and to deride, and to disown it.

Before entering into what we conceive to be the right answer to this objection, let us previously observe, that it goes to strip the Deity of an attribute which

forms a wonderful addition to the glories of his incomprehensible character. *It is indeed a mighty evidence of the strength of his arm, that so many millions of worlds are suspended on it; but it would surely make the high attribute of his power more illustrious, if while it expatiated at large among the suns and the systems of astronomy, it could, at the very same instant, be impressing a movement and a direction on all the minuter wheels of that machinery, which is working incessantly around us* It forms a noble demonstration—of his wisdom, that he gives unremitting operation to those laws which uphold the stability of this great universe; but it would go to heighten that wisdom inconceivably, if while equal to the magnificent task of maintaining the order, and harmony of the spheres, it was lavishing its inexhaustible resources on the beauties, and varieties, and arrangements, of every one scene, however humble, of every one field, however narrow, of the creation he had formed. It is a cheering evidence of the delight he takes in communicating happiness, that the whole of immensity should be so strewed with the habitations of life and of intelligence; but it would surely bring home the evidence, with a nearer and more affecting impression, to every bosom, did we know, that at the very time his benignant regard took in the mighty circle of created beings, there was not a single family overlooked by him, and that every individual in every corner of his dominions, was as effectually seen to, as if the object of an exclusive and undivided care. *It is our imperfection, that we cannot give our attention to more than one object at one and the same instant of time; but surely it would elevate our every idea of the perfections of God, did we know, that while his comprehensive mind could grasp the whole amplitude of nature, to the very outermost of its boundaries, he had an attentive eye fastened on the very humblest of its objects, and pondered every thought of my heart, and noticed every footstep of my goings, and treasured up in his remembrance every turn and every movement of my history.*

And, lastly, to apply this train of sentiment to the matter before us; let us suppose that one among the countless myriad's of worlds, should be visited by a moral pestilence, which spread through all its people, and brought them under the doom of a law, whose sanctions were unrelenting and immutable; it were no disparagement to God, should he, by an act of righteous indignation, sweep this offence away from the universe which it deformed—nor should we wonder, though, among the multitude of other worlds from which the ear of the Almighty was regaled with the songs of praise, and the incense of a pure adoration ascended to his throne, he should leave the strayed and solitary world to perish in the guilt of its rebellion. But, tell me, oh! Tell me, would it not throw the softening of a most exquisite tenderness over the character of God, should we see him putting forth his every expedient to reclaim to himself those children who had wandered away from him—and, few as they were when compared with the host of his obedient worshippers, would it not just impart to his attribute of compassion the infinity of the Godhead, that, rather than lose the single world which had turned to its own

way, he should send the messengers of peace to woo and to welcome it back again; and, if justice demanded so mighty a sacrifice, and the law behoved to be so magnified and made honourable, tell me whether it would not throw a moral sublime over the goodness of Deity, should he lay upon his own Son the burden of its atonement, that he might again smile upon the world, and hold out the sceptre of invitation to all its families?

We avow it, therefore, that this infidel argument goes to expunge a perfection from the character of God. The more we know of the extent of nature, should not we have the loftier conception of him who sits in high authority over the concerns of so wide a universe? But, is it not adding to the bright catalogue of his other attributes, to say that, while magnitude does not overpower him, minuteness cannot escape him, and variety cannot bewilder him; and that, at the very time while the mind of the Deity is abroad over the whole vastness of creation; there is not one particle of matter, there is not one individual principle of rational or of animal existence, there is not one single world in that expanse which teems with them, that his eye does not discern as constantly, and his hand does not guide as unerringly, and his spirit does not watch and care for as vigilantly, as if it formed the one and exclusive object of his attention.

The thing is inconceivable to us, whose minds are so easily distracted by a number of objects; and this is the secret principle of the whole infidelity I am now alluding to. To bring God to the level of our own comprehension, we would clothe him in the impotency of man. We would transfer to his wonderful mind all the imperfection of our own faculties. When we are taught by astronomy, that he has millions of worlds to look after, and that each of these worlds must be looked after imperfectly. The use that we make of a discovery, which should hasten our every conception of God; and humble us into the sentiment, that a Being of such mysterious elevation is to us unfathomable, is to sit in judgment over him, aye, and to pronounce such a judgment as degrades him, and keeps him down to the standard of our own paltry imagination! We are introduced by modern science to a multitude of other suns and of other systems; and the perverse interpretation we put upon the fact, that God can diffuse the benefits of his power and of his goodness over such a variety of worlds, is, that he cannot, or will not, bestow so much goodness on one of those worlds, as a professed revelation from Heaven has announced to us. While we enlarge the provinces of his empire, we tarnish all the glory of this enlargement, by saying, he has so much to care for, that the care of every one province must be less complete, and less vigilant, and less effectual, than it would otherwise have been. By the discoveries of modern science, we multiply the places of the creation; but along with this, we would impair the attribute of his eye being in every place to behold the evil and the good; and thus, while we magnify one of his perfections, we do it at the expense of another; and to bring him within the grasp of our feeble capacity, would deface one of the glories of that character,

which it is our part to adore, as higher than all thought and as greater than all comprehension.

The objection we are discussing, I shall state again in a single sentence. Since astronomy has unfolded to us such a number of worlds, it is not likely that God would pay so much attention to this one world, and set up such wonderful provisions for its benefit, as are announced to us in the Christian Revelation. This objection will have received its answer; if we can meet it, by the following position:—that God, in addition to the bare faculty of dwelling on a multiplicity of objects at one and the same time, has this faculty in such wonderful perfection that he can attend as fully and provide as richly, and manifest all his attributes as illustriously, on every one of these objects, as if the rest had no existence, and no place whatever in his government or in his thoughts. For the evidence of this position, we appeal, in the first place, to the personal history of each individual among you. Only grant us, that *God never loses sight of any one thing he has created, and that no created thing can continue either to be or to act independently of him*, and then, even upon the face of this world, humble as it is on the great scale of astronomy, how widely diversified and how multiplied into many thousand distinct exercises, is the attention of God! *His eye is upon every hour of my existence. His spirit is intimately present with every thought of my heart. His inspiration gives birth to every purpose within his: His hand impresses a direction on every footstep of my goings.* Every breath I inhale, is drawn by an energy which God deals out to me. This body, which, upon the slightest derangement, would become the prey of death, or of woeful suffering, is now at ease, because he at this moment is warding off from me a thousand dangers, and upholding the thousand movements of its complex and delicate machinery. His presiding influence keeps by me through the whole current of my restless and ever changing history. *When I walk by the way side, he is along with me. When I enter into company, amid all my forgetfulness of him, he never forgets me.* In the silent watches of the night, when my eyelids have closed, and my spirit has sunk into unconsciousness, the observant eye of him who never slumbers, is upon me. I cannot fly from his presence. Go where I will, he tends me, and watches me, and cares for me; and the same being who is now at work in the remotest domains of Nature and of Providence, is also at my right hand to eke out to me every moment of my being, and to uphold me in the exercise of all my feelings, and of all my faculties.

Now, what God is doing with me, he is doing with every distinct individual of this world's population. The intimacy of his presence, and attention, and care, reaches to one and to all of them. With a mind unburdened by the vastness of all its other concerns, he can prosecute, without distraction, the government and guardianship of every one son and daughter of the species.—And is it for us, in the face of all this experience, ungratefully to draw a limit around the perfections of God?—to aver, that the multitude of other worlds has withdrawn any portion of

his benevolence from the one we occupy?—or that he, whose eye is upon every separate family of the earth, would not lavish all the riches of his unsearchable attributes on some high plan of pardon and immortality, in behalf of its countless generations?

But, secondly, were the mind of God so fatigued, and so occupied with the care of other worlds, as the objection presumes him to be, should we not see some traces of neglect, or of carelessness, in his management of ours? Should we not behold, in many a field of observation, the evidence of its master being overcrowded with the variety of his other engagements? A man oppressed by a multitude of business, would simplify and reduce the work of any new concern that was devolved upon him. Now, point out a single mark of God being thus oppressed. Astronomy has laid open to us so many realms of creation, which were before unheard of, that the world we inhabit shrinks into one remote and solitary province of his wide monarchy. Tell me, then, if, in any one field of this province, which man has access to, you witness a single indication of God sparing himself—of God reduced to languor by the weight of his other employments—of God sinking under the burden of that vast superintendence which lies upon him—of God being exhausted, as one of ourselves would be, by any number of concerns, however great, by any variety of them, however manifold? and do you not perceive, in that mighty profusion of wisdom and of goodness, which is scattered everywhere around us, that the thoughts of this unsearchable Being are not as our thoughts, nor his ways as our ways?

My time does not suffer me to dwell on this topic, because, before I conclude; I must hasten to another illustration. But when I look abroad on the wondrous scene that is immediately before me—and see, that in every direction it is a scene of the most various and unwearied activity—and expatiate on all the beauties of that garniture by which it is adorned, and on all the prints of design and of benevolence which abound in it—and think, that the same God, who holds the universe, with its every system, in the hollow of his hand, pencils every flower, and gives nourishment to every blade of grass—and actuates the movements of every living thing—and is not disabled, by the weight of his other cares, from enriching the humble department of nature I occupy, with charms and accommodations, of the most unbounded variety—then, surely, if a message, bearing every mark of authenticity, should profess to come to me from God, and inform me of his mighty doings for the happiness of our species, it is not for me, in the face of all this evidence, to reject it as a tale of imposture, because astronomers have told me that he has so many other worlds and other orders of beings to attend to—and, when I think that it were a deposition of him from his supremacy over the creatures he has formed, should a single sparrow fall to the ground without his appointment, then let science and sophistry try to cheat me of my comfort as they may—I will

not let go the anchor of my confidence in God—I will not be afraid, for I am of more value than many sparrows.

But thirdly, it was the telescope, that by piercing the obscurity which lies between us and distant worlds, put infidelity in possession of the argument, against which we are now contending. But, about the time of its invention, another instrument was formed, which laid open a scene no less wonderful, and rewarded the inquisitive spirit of man with a discovery, which serves to neutralize the whole of this argument. This was the microscope. *The one led me to see a system in every star. The other leads me to see a world in every atom.* The one taught me, that this mighty globe, with the whole burden of its people, and of its countries, is but a grain of sand on the high field of immensity. The other teaches me, that every grain of sand may harbour within it the tribes and the families of a busy population. The one told me of the insignificance of the world I tread upon. The other redeems it from all its insignificance; for it tells me that in the leaves of every forest, and in the flowers of every garden, and in the waters of every rivulet, there are worlds teeming with life, and numberless as are the glories of the firmament. The one has suggested to me, that beyond and above all that is visible to man, there may lie fields of creation which sweep immeasurably along, and carry the impress of the Almighty's hand to the remotest scenes of the universe. The other suggests to me, that within and beneath all that minuteness which the aided eye of man has been able to explore, there may be a region of invisibles; and that could we draw aside the mysterious curtain which shrouds it from our senses, we might there see a theatre of as many wonders as astronomy has unfolded, a universe within the compass of a point so small, as to elude all the powers of the microscope, but where the wonder working God finds room for the exercise of all his attributes, where he can raise another mechanism of worlds, and fill and animate them all with the evidences of his glory.

Now, mark how all this may be made to meet the argument of our infidel astronomers. By the telescope they have discovered, that no magnitude, however vast, is beyond the grasp of the Divinity. But by the microscope we have also discovered, that no minuteness, however shrunk from the notice of the human eye, is beneath the condescension of his regard. Every addition to the powers of the one instrument, extends the limit of his visible dominions. But, by every addition to the powers of the other instrument, we see each part of them more crowded than before, with the wonders of his unwearying hand. The one is constantly widening the circle of his territory. The other is as constantly filling up its separate portions, with all that is rich, and various, and exquisite. In a word, by the one I am told that the Almighty is now at work in regions more distant than geometry has ever measured, and among worlds more manifold than numbers have ever reached. But, by the other, I am also told, that, with a mind to comprehend the whole, in the vast compass of its generality, he has also a mind to concentrate a



close and a separate attention on each and on all of its particulars; and that *the same God, who sends forth an upholding influence among the orbs and the movements of astronomy, can fill the recesses of every single atom with the intimacy of his presence, and travel, in all the greatness of his unimpaired attributes, upon every one spot and corner of the universe he has formed.*

They, therefore, who think that God will not put forth such a power, and such a goodness, and such a condescension, in behalf of this world, as are ascribed to him in the New Testament, because he has so many other worlds to attend to, think of him as a man. They confine their view to the informations of the telescope, and forget altogether the informations of the other instrument. They only find room in their minds for his one attribute of a large and general superintendance, and keep out of their remembrance, the equally impressive proofs we have for his other attribute of a minute and multiplied attention to all that diversity of operations, where it is he that worketh all in all. And then I think, that as one of the instruments of philosophy has heightened our every impression of the first of these attributes, so another instrument has no less heightened our impression of the second of them—then I can no longer resist the conclusion, that it would be a transgression of sound argument, as well as a daring of impiety, to draw a limit around the doings of this unsearchable God—and, should a professed revelation from heaven, tell me of an act of condescension, in behalf of some separate world, so wonderful that angels desired to look into it, and the Eternal Son had to move from his seat of glory to carry it into accomplishment, all I ask is the evidence of such a revelation; for, let it tell me as much as it may of God letting himself down for the benefit of one single province of his dominions, this is no more than what I see lying scattered, in numberless examples, before me; and running through the whole line of my recollections; and meeting me in every walk of observation to which I can betake myself; and, now that the microscope has unveiled the wonders of another region, I see strewn around me, with a profusion which baffles my every attempt to comprehend it, the evidence that there is no one portion of the universe of God too minute for his notice, nor too humble for the visitations of his care.

As the end of all these illustrations, let me bestow a single paragraph on what I conceive to be the precise state of this argument.

It is a wonderful thing that God should be so unincumbered by the concerns of a whole universe, that he can give a constant attention to every moment of every individual in this world's population. But, wonderful as it is you do not hesitate to admit it as true, on the evidence of your own recollections. It is a wonderful thing that he whose eye is at every instant on so many worlds, should have peopled the world we inhabit with all the traces of the varied design and benevolence which abound in it. But, great as the wonder is, you do not allow so much as the shadow of improbability to darken it, for its reality is what you actually witness, and you

never think of questioning the evidence of observation. It is wonderful, it is passing wonderful, that the same God, whose presence is diffused through immensity, and who spreads the ample canopy of his administration over all its dwelling-places, should, with an energy as fresh and as unexpended as if he had only begun the work of creation, turn him to the neighbourhood around us, and lavish on its every handbreadth, all the exuberance of his goodness, and crowd it with the many thousand varieties of conscious existence. But, be the wonder incomprehensible as it may, you do not suffer in your mind the burden of a single doubt to lie upon it because you do not question the report of the microscope. You do not refuse its information, nor turn away from it as an incompetent channel of evidence.

But to bring it still nearer to the point at issue, there are many who never looked through a microscope; but who rest an implicit faith in all its revelations; and upon what evidence, I would ask? Upon the evidence of testimony—upon the credit they give to the authors of the books they have read, and the belief they put in the record of their observations. Now, at this point I make my stand. It is wonderful that God should be so interested in the redemption of a single world, as to send forth his well-beloved Son upon the errand, and he, to accomplish it, should, mighty to save, put forth all his strength, and travail in the greatness of it. But such wonders as these have already multiplied upon you; and when evidence is given of their truth, you have resigned your every judgment of the unsearchable God, and rested in the faith of them. I demand, in the name of sound and consistent philosophy, that you do the same in the matter before us—and take it up as a question of evidence—and examine that medium of testimony through which the miracles and informations of the Gospel have come to your door—and go not to admit as argument here, what would not be admitted as argument in any of the analogies of nature and observation—and take along with you in this field of inquiry, a lesson which you should have learned upon other fields—even the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God, that his judgments are unsearchable, and his ways are past finding out.

I do not enter at all into the positive evidence for the truth of the Christian Revelation, my single aim at present being to dispose of one of the objections which is conceived to stand in the way of it. Let me suppose then that this is done to the satisfaction of a philosophical inquirer, and that the evidence is sustained, and that the same mind that is familiarised to all the sublimities of natural science, and has been in the habit of contemplating God in association with all the magnificence which is around him, shall be brought to submit its thoughts to the captivity of the doctrine of Christ. *Oh! with what veneration, and gratitude, and wonder, should he look on the descent of him into this lower world, who made all these things, and without whom was not any thing made that was made.* What a grandeur does it throw over every step in the redemption of a fallen world, to think of its being done by him who unrobed him of the glories of so wide a monarchy, and came to this

humblest of its provinces, in the disguise of a servant, and took upon him the form of our degraded species, and let himself down to sorrows and to sufferings, and to death, for us.

*In this love of an expiring Saviour to those for whom in agony he poured out his soul, there is a height, and a depth, and a length, and a breadth, more than I can comprehend; and let me never, never from this moment neglect so great a salvation, or lose my hold of an atonement, made sure by him who cried, that it was finished, and brought in an everlasting righteousness.* It was not the visit of an empty parade that he made to us. It was for the accomplishment of some substantial purpose; and, if that purpose is announced, and stated to consist in his dying the just for the unjust, that he might bring us unto God, let us never doubt of our acceptance in that way of communication with our Father in heaven, which he hath opened and made known to us.

In taking to that way, let us follow his every direction with that humility which a sense of all this wonderful condescension is fitted to inspire. *Let us forsake all that he bids us forsake. Let us do all that he bids us do. Let us give ourselves up to his guidance with the docility of children, overpowered by a kindness that we never merited, and a love that is unequalled by all the perverseness and all the ingratitude of our stubborn nature*—for what shall we render unto him for such mysterious benefits—to him who has thus been mindful of us—to him who thus has deigned to visit us? *Oh Majestic Splendor!!*

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**Thomas Chalmers** (1780-1847): Presbyterian theologian, preacher, and leader of the Free Church of Scotland (formed in 1843). He was educated at St. Andrews, and licensed to preach in 1799, and pastored at Kilmany, Fife and Tron Church and St. John's, Glasgow. His publications include the *Institutes of Theology*.

