

GOD And Missions Today

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Chapter 5

GOD'S POWER IN MISSIONS

IN THE PROSECUTION of Christian missions what is the secret of success, the source of power? The secret of power is not human, but divine, and even so far as it is found in humanity has an element of divinity.

The Word of GOD, an adequate guide in all things, teaches us the whole truth that we need to know upon this subject.

We select two representative passages, which again we put side by side for comparison and completeness of view.

"And Jesus came and spake unto them saying all *power* is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore and teach all nations . . . And, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the age. Amen" (Matthew 28:18-20).

"And behold I send the promise of my Father upon you: But tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem until ye be endued with *power* from on high" (Luke 24:49).

"But ye shall receive *power* after that the HOLY GHOST is come upon you" (Acts 1:8).

It will be noticed that here three times we have this word **power**, and the repetition is significant.

- In the first case, it is associated with the Son, who here claims for Himself omnipotence, both in Heaven and in earth.
- In the second case, it is associated with the Father, as proceeding forth from Him, and as His gift in connection with the mission of believers; and,
- In the third case it is associated with the HOLY SPIRIT, as His enduement and endowment.

Our LORD says, **"All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth; and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end."** The word here used is also used for authority, rule, dominion, jurisdiction. CHRIST is head over all to the Church, and Governor among the nations. His is administrative power, on the throne of universal empire and on the field of battle and conquest.

This truth is further beautifully and impressively set forth in two conspicuous passages of Scripture, one of which is a didactic psalm and poem, the other a historic narrative which hides an undoubted allegorical meaning behind the historical fact. Comparing spiritual things with spiritual, we may draw from these Scriptures some grand and instructive and inspiring lessons.

1. The first of them is the second Psalm. Here the Psalmist has a far-sighted vision of MESSIAH, as set by JEHOVAH, upon the throne of dominion; and it clearly pertains not to the triumphant, but to the militant period. All are not subdued under His sway, but in a state of rebellion and revolt. It is not a converted world over which MESSIAH holds the reins of empire, but over a godless and faithless host of rebels. **"The heathen rage."**

We seem to see the enemies of GOD rising up against the Father and the Son with frantic tumult; at first like the wild surge of a stormy sea, a disorganized mob of rebels, raging heathen, and angry peoples. Then the opposition takes form and is organized under leaders; their kings take a stand against GOD, and their rulers meet in council to conspire and combine in a league of hatred.

In the midst of their vain boasting, and as they are gathering for organized assault, JEHOVAH in holy wrath speaks. **"Yet"** -notwithstanding all this impotent rage - **"yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion."** The reference is to David as a type of MESSIAH. And now MESSIAH takes up the word of JEHOVAH and declares the divine decree.

He says, **"I will declare the** (eternal, unchangeable by virtue of which I reign) **degree. The Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son,** (as Son, heir to my empire). **this day have I begotten Thee."**

What that day is other Scriptures leave us in no doubt - it was the day of CHRIST's Resurrection (Acts 13:33; Romans 1:4; Colossians 1:18). JESUS, rising from the dead, claims the throne of the world. His scepter is in His hand but the heathen and the peoples at large are yet in revolt both against JEHOVAH and against His Messianic King.

Amid this confusion of tumult and riot, GOD again says: **"Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession."** That is to say, like an irresistible monarch, even the revolted subjects are part of His **"inheritance,"** and the uttermost parts of the earth that have neither yielded to His rule nor heard of His resurrection belong to His "possession."

This psalm may be regarded as the key to a large part of both New and Old Testament truth.

When He rose from the dead, CHRIST ascended to the throne and assumed the scepter. He knew that thousands of years lay before Him and His Church, during which that rule was to be disputed and antagonized; He was sending disciples forth as sheep among wolves; they would be persecuted, imprisoned, slain; His witnesses would be martyrs - death would be the end of their service and suffering, instead of seeming victory, apparent defeat.

And so He held out no false hopes, no assurance that the time had come to restore again the

kingdom to Israel, or to begin His millennial reign. Century after century would pass and still the world would not have Him to reign over them; and even the Church would fall into apostasy and a form of godliness take the place of its power. But He says that He will go to His Father and theirs, His GOD and theirs to take His scepter. **"All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth."** **"Go ye therefore . . . and teach all nations!"** Everywhere preach! Everywhere bear witness! You shall be hated of all men for My name's sake; you shall be scourged, put in prison, put to death, but all this shall turn to you for a testimony, a part of your witness-bearing. You will find the heathen raging, the peoples plotting, kings and rulers conspiring; let them try to demolish My throne and break the bands of My rule! Their efforts shall be met with derisive scorn. - The wrath of man shall praise Him, and the remainder of wrath will He restrain. When crises come which can in no other way be met, and violence reaches its height of daring and defiance, the Messianic King vindicates Himself and His servants; He stretches out His hand and with His iron scepter breaks into pieces His foes.

Here is the hope of missions in the darkest days: this Psalm, so often applied to the Church Triumphant, was meant for the Church Militant; and never was it needed more than now, when, in so many parts of the field of missions, we seem met by persistent resistance. CHRIST has all power and is on the throne; "Go ye," missionaries, He is "with you alway" even to the end of this age of organized and violent opposition. When you find yourselves driven to the wall and the cause seems hopeless, appeal to Him and He will appear for you. It may be in the conquest of grace, it may be in the awful conquest of wrath; but rejoice, He is King!

An example of this interposition should be put on permanent record.

The year 1839 was the great pivotal year of Turkish missions. Persecution bared her red right arm. The bitter hostility of the Armenian Church broke out in a storm. The despotic head of the Turkish government, Sultan Mahmud, united his civil power with their ecclesiastical to extirpate the Christian heretics. The work, begun by William Goodell, seemed likely, after twenty years, to crash to ruins. The persecution waxed hotter and fiercer, and the missionaries were formally accused before the Sublime Porte. An order was obtained from Mahmud for the expulsion of all missionaries.

In that darkest hour of Turkish missions, the pioneer Goodell, in his peculiar way, said: "The Great Sultan of the Universe can change all this." The missionaries, sorely beset, took refuge in the Ninety-first Psalm. They besought the LORD to come down as in the days of old and make the mountains flow down at His presence. While their hands were yet lifted in prayer, on July 1, 1839, Sultan Mahmud died.

Not only did GOD interpose, but by a series of the most striking providences on record in history, the power of their foes was broken. Six days before, the Turkish forces had been routed near Aleppo; an exhausted treasury absorbed government attention; a fearful conflagration visited Constantinople on August 9, and from three thousand to four thousand houses were reduced to ashes. GOD's hand was laid heavily on the Armenians who led in the persecution. And so marked was the evidence of a divine interposition that it was a common saying that GOD was taking the side of the persecuted and vindicating their cause. In fact, a council was called and the exiles were recalled, and all rigorous measures suspended. The leaders were unchanged in spirit, but they were not unawed. They saw an Almighty Hand uplifted to arrest the arm of in-

tolerance, and they dared not go forward. Of such interpositions of Providence missionary history is full.

2. The other passage which throws light upon Our Lord's promised presence and power is the story of the capture of Jericho.

The Book of Joshua is the book of a militant Church, the wars of the Canaanites; it is the book of entrance and conquest, possession and dispossession. Even in the Promised Land GOD's people found long, hard fighting, and every inch of advance disputed. The capture of Jericho is the first great step, the typical conflict; notice how it was conducted. A strange personage appears on the scene and announces Himself to Joshua as "**The Captain of the Lord's host.**" Joshua perceives His divine character, and humbly and adoringly gives into his hand the scepter of leadership.

His directions were explicit, and were implicitly followed. The city was to be compassed about once a day for six days, and seven times on the seventh day. The Ark of the Testimony was borne, the priests blowing the trumpets, and at a given signal the whole host shouted with a great shout of anticipative victory. Then, without one blow being struck, or one carnal weapon being used, the walls fell flat. The host simply marched over the ruins and took the city captive.

What an object lesson on missions!

A militant Church undertakes to take possession of the earth promised to her as her joint inheritance with her LORD and Head. At every step her advance was met with deadly opposition. But the Invisible Captain of the Lord's host is on the battlefield, and His orders are explicit. We are to surround every stronghold, we are to bear the sacred treasure, our testimony for GOD, in the very van, and blow the trumpet of the Gospel herald.

We are not to meet violence with violence, or hate with hate; we are to use no carnal weapons, rely on no worldly alliances of power or patronage, wisdom or wealth. It is not by power nor might; "**the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through GOD to the pulling down of strongholds, casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of GOD, and bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.**"

This is the way to fulfill our obedience, and so revenge the disobedience of men. Let men deride our methods; as we scorn worldly policy and simply blow the Gospel trumpet, GOD is pleased by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe, that the excellency of the power may be of GOD and not of us.

This is the dual power of CHRIST's promised presence. He is on the throne, watching over the affairs of His militant Church. He scorns the impotent malice of His foes and, when they persist in rage, breaks them in pieces. The same scepter that to His Church is golden - the scepter of defense and protection and blessing - is to implacable enemies an iron rod of destruction and wrath and cursing. And He from the throne sends forth law and judgment, from the battlefield directs the fray and leads on the host. If we only cultivate the clear-seeing eye we may behold His white plume and white horse as He rides forth conquering and to conquer.

And now you may ask, What more is needed? Let it be observed that thus far we have power exerted on behalf of the Church, guiding, guarding and governing disciples and assuring final triumph over all foes of the Kingdom. This is administrative power.

But there is another field for the display of power.

The work of missions is primarily constructive, not destructive. It aims to save, not to slay, and seeks to destroy foes by making them friends. We want another sort of power, working upon the minds and hearts of men and converting the sinner into the saint, and the unbeliever and disbeliever into the believer. We need a power that shall induce men voluntarily to yield to CHRIST, not simply compel them involuntarily to submit; to take His yoke upon them of choice, not of dire necessity, like vanquished foes. And just this is the power of the HOLY GHOST which was promised of the Father, and which Our LORD counted of such importance that He bade disciples tarry until they were endued with this power from on high. Here the word is not authority, but power. A new dynamic force was to be communicated.

The promise of the Father is the bestowment of the Spirit of all power and grace. Pentecost was the beginning of the fulfillment of that promise, and Pentecost was typical. We see how this power is to be manifested all through this Gospel age, from the manifestation of it then.

First it came upon disciples, an endowment and endowment. It was a baptism, a chrism, a clothing with heavenly energy, an anointing with celestial unction. Here is power in the disciple, fitting him to witness, and working on the unbeliever, moving him to repentance, faith, conversion, and confession. And now nothing more can be required. The full secret of success is absolutely found. The Church of GOD, tarrying at Jerusalem for the divine anointing, now goes forth to work and to war.

We need to get new conceptions of Christian missions and the Power behind the mission band. We are waging warfare against iniquity and idolatry; the campaign is world-wide and age long, the foes are daring, desperate, diabolical. The strongholds crown every hilltop, and are seemingly impregnable; but the Leader is divine; His strategy, His methods, His weapons, insure victory. His hosts are not earthly and human only, but heavenly; and the Church has only to be obedient, cultivate unity within and loyalty to her LORD, and in faith blow the cornets of Jubilee and use the mighty rod of prayer.

3. Before bringing this discussion to a close, the power of the HOLY GHOST should be considered in its relation to our fitness to proclaim the good tidings.

The efficiency of a true witness, set on fire of a deep heart experience, is next to omnipotence: it carries before it all opposition like a flame fed with oxygen and fanned by high winds. And hence the simplest believer may attain a power as a witness which none of the princes of this world knew. It is not the rhetoric or the logic of the schools which charm and captivate the souls of men.

Paul uses the significant phrase, "**demonstration of the Spirit.**" There is no process of logic that is equal to His for convincing of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. The most elaborate human argument often fails to demonstrate: the Spirit of GOD opens the blind eye and flashes

conviction instantaneously upon the soul.

If we are to have new power in missions, we must have a higher standard of living.

Therefore do we maintain steadfastly that no great power can attend Christian missions while in the Church, Christian life sinks to a low level. Such a life can beget no life of a higher sort, and our missionaries will, in their work, represent our uncertain convictions and our divided affections, and their unbelief and worldliness will make GOD's many mighty works impossible on the foreign field.

It was October 7, 1805, thirteen years almost to a day from the day when that mission compact was signed at Kettering, that Carey, Marshman, and Ward, at Serampore, drew up their famous spiritual "Covenant." It covered twelve printed pages octavo, and was read publicly at every station at least once a year.

If anyone would see what sort of men GOD chose to lead the van of His modern missionary post, let him study that "Form of agreement respecting the great principles upon which the brethren of the mission thought it their duty to act in the work of instructing the heathen."

We give here its most important parts, for personal reflection:

"IT IS ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY:

"1. That we set an infinite value upon immortal souls.

"2. That we gain all information of the snares and delusions in which these heathen are held.

"3. That we abstain from all those things which would increase their prejudices against the Gospel.

"4. That we watch all opportunities for doing good.

"5. That we keep to the example of Paul, and make the great subject of our preaching, CHRIST the Crucified.

"6. That the natives should have an entire confidence in us and feel quite at home in our company.

"7. That we build up and watch over the souls that may be gathered.

"8. That we form our native brethren to usefulness, fostering every kind of genius and cherishing every gift and grace in them, especially advising the native churches to choose their own pastors and deacons from among their own countrymen.

"9. That we labor with all our might in forwarding translations of the Sacred Scriptures in the languages of India.

"10. That we establish native free-schools and recommend their establishment to other Europeans.

"11. That we be constant in prayer and the cultivation of personal religion, to fit us for the discharge of these laborious and unutterably important labors. Let us often look at Brainerd in the woods of America, pouring out his very soul before GOD for the perishing heathen, without whose salvation nothing could make him happy.

"12. That we give ourselves unreservedly to this glorious cause. Let us never think that our time, our gifts, our strength, our families, or even the clothes we wear, are our own. Let us sanctify them all to GOD and His cause. Oh, that He may sanctify us for His work! No private family

ever enjoyed a greater portion of happiness than we have done since we resolved to have all things in common. If we are enabled to persevere, we may hope that multitudes of converted souls will have reason to bless GOD to all eternity for sending His Gospel into this country."

To this nothing remains to be added. It reads like an inspired paper. The marks of the HOLY GHOST are upon it. And we commend it to all friends of missions.

Let this covenant be to the Church of CHRIST a trumpet peal of GOD for a new advance. A higher type of piety is the demand of our day. Spiritual power depends upon spiritual life. Never will the HOLY SPIRIT set a premium upon low spiritual attainment by resting, in Shekinah glory, upon a Church in whose courts are the idols of this world. While the Word of GOD is neglected, prayer degenerates into a form, and worship into ritual; while the line of separation is obliterated between the Church and the world, and the whole life of the Church is on the lowest level, we shall look in vain for the anointing from above.

Our mistake is fatal if we conceive of power in missions as human. Even the most convincing argument, the most captivating rhetoric, the most exalted eloquence, does not imply this power. Unction has a logic, rhetoric, eloquence of its own.

The power to move men God ward is a power purely of GOD, and must be carefully distinguished from all channels through which it flows, or means by which it works, as the lightning is distinct from the cloud it charges, or the wind from the wave it heaves and rolls. This endowment of power defies all analysis. The secret seems to lie now in the glow of ardor and fervor, and then in tears of tenderness; now in the logic of reason on fire with conviction, and then in the logic of love warning and inviting. So also does it defy description, like savor, flavor, fragrance. But one may be profoundly sensible of its presence or absence. A sermon may be full of learning, empty of life - the mummy of the Gospel, the form without the soul, dead orthodoxy, wrapped in the cerements of the grave and having the odor of decay.

Be assured, the greatest lack of missions, both at home and abroad, is the want of this anointing. Tarry before GOD till you get it. No waiting for this is wasting time. Better one day with power from on high than a hundred or a thousand in its absence. GOD would not have us neglect the natural basis of studious and systematic preparation, for grace sets no premium on sloth. Nor would GOD have us neglect the spiritual basis, in general purity and piety of character. But, beside and beyond this, GOD would have us feel our deep need of the promise of the Father. Let our need drive us to GOD. Let the securing of this unction be our supreme aim and absorbing prayer. **"Tarry until you are endued with power from on high."** Here lies the basis and bottom of all power in subduing this world for CHRIST.

This is the complex yet simple power of missions - CHRIST on the throne ruling the Church, restraining the powers of darkness, and extending His shield over His own; CHRIST on the battlefield leading His Church to conflict and conquest; then the HOLY SPIRIT, enduing His witnesses and making them the power of GOD to win souls. When our ministers and missionaries recognize and realize this need, cherish this aim, and breathe this prayer on every field of missions, a new force will be felt and a new power manifested. Then we shall see results on the whole field. Doors will open, until not a hermit nation remains or one shut gate confronts us.

Gigantic barriers will be removed and walls of adamant will crumble. Converts will be multiplied till they spring up like grass along watercourses. Congregations will gather, churches will be organized, schools will be established everywhere, even in the desert; streams will burst forth and flow God-ward, turning the wilderness into Eden; native evangelists will press into the regions beyond, opposition will only make disciples strong, and martyr fires only kindle flames of love to GOD and man.

Before a Church that enthrones CHRIST in the heart and follows Him everywhere; before a Church baptized with the fire of the HOLY GHOST, nothing can stand. Francis Xavier stood before China and saw its vastness loom up like a mountain that shut out the very sky, and he cried, "O rock, rock, when wilt thou open to my MASTER?" And that rock still stands, the Gibraltar of heathenism. GOD waits to be asked, and wills to give us all this power simply for the asking. A dying world is about us - nay, a dead world - but the Word of Life is in our hands. Oh, for the Spirit of Life! Let Him endue us, and our speech is no more with enticing words of man's wisdom, but with demonstration of the HOLY GHOST.

In the Valley of Indecision the wind of Heaven breathes, signs of life appear, the dry bones move, bone cleaves to bone. The skeleton of creed is clad with the flesh of faith, and, where the slain of Satan lay, the hosts of GOD encamp. For such power from on high let us so earnestly seek that every breath of spiritual life shall become a prayer

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