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The Greatness of God

God is glorified by revealing

Himself, and the Son of God glorified the Father by making Him known. So those who are taught and led by the Spirit of God glorify Him by acknowledging His attributes, and by adoring Him as He declares Himself in His works and His ways, recorded in the Holy Scriptures, or seen by His people. The first of God's attributes brought before us is His greatness, for both majesty and power are especially displayed in creation. That the goodness and the mercy of God should mainly occupy the thoughts and the praise of a redeemed people is natural and right. But we must never forget that the desires of Him who is infinitely good could not have resulted in the recovery of the lost and the blessing of the needy, had not His greatness been such as to enable Him to turn thoughts of mercy into purposes of grace which no power can ever frustrate.

It is the joy of His people to know that He is both "great in counsel and mighty in work" (Jer. 32:19). When Moses bade Israel, "Ascribe ye greatness unto our God" (Deut. 32:3), he certainly had before him the mighty works of God on behalf of that people in delivering them from Egypt, bearing with them in their perversity, leading them, and supplying their need in the wilderness (vv. 7-14). But all this does not affect the truth that the first manifestation of God's greatness was in creation, when "He spake, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast" (Ps. 33:9; Gen. 1).

God silenced the man who uttered things that he "understood not" by bringing before him some of the

works of His hands, so that Job, with his mouth in the dust, acknowledged, "I know that Thou canst do all things, and that no purpose of Thine can be restrained" (Job 42:2, rv). The Psalms and the Prophets are full of the same theme. When we reach the book of the Revelation, we find that while the first expression of worship is found in the acknowledgment of what God is in Himself as the Holy One (Rev. 4:8), the second is addressed to Him as Creator: "Worthy art Thou, our Lord and our God...for Thou didst create all things, and because of Thy will they were, and were created'' (v. 11, rv).

David had a true sense of the greatness of God. When God had magnified His word of promise to him above all previous revelations of His Name (Ps. 138:2), he acknowledged, "Thou art great, O Lord God" (2 Sam. 7:22). And when he had been permitted and enabled to prepare for the building of the temple, he confessed, "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 Chron. 29:11). In connection with this same building Solomon declared, "The house which I build is great: for great is our God above all gods" (2 Chron. 2:5).

It may seem strange to us that the greatness of Jehovah is so often set forth in contrast with the supposed power of false gods, as if these gods really existed and had some power. The whole subject of idolatry and its hold on nations is shrouded in mystery; but we can only conclude that powers of darkness are behind all these systems of idolatry, and not less behind the systems of

apostate Christendom (see 1 Cor. 10:20; 2 Cor. 11:13-15).

Jehovah declared to Moses that against all the gods of Egypt He would execute judgment, and Jethro confessed, "Now I know that Jehovah is greater than all gods: for in the thing wherewith they dealt proudly, He was above them" (Ex. 18:11). We can little estimate the effect of this interposition of Jehovah in delivering Israel, both on unseen powers and on surrounding nations. The Philistines referred to it more than three centuries afterwards, and trembled (1 Sam. 4:7-8).

But, however false gods were regarded, faith always grasped the truth of the absolute supremacy of Jehovah, and could say, "I know that Jehovah is great, and that our Lord is above all gods. Whatsoever Jehovah pleased, that did He in heaven and earth in the seas and all deep places" (Ps. 135:5-6).

David declared, "Thou art great and doest wondrous things: Thou art God alone" (Ps. 86:10), and Hezekiah acknowledged, "Thou art the God, even Thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth: Thou hast made heaven and earth" (Isa. 37:16). It was this assurance that gave him confidence in appealing to God for deliverance from the power of Assyria.

A true sense of God's greatness (which no unregenerate man has) leads to worship. If from our hearts we acknowledge, "Great is Jehovah," we shall surely add, "and greatly to be praised." The more we know of God, the more deeply shall we feel that "His greatness is unsearchable"; yet it will be our delight, even as it is our privilege, to search into that greatness. What a stay to his soul did Jeremiah find in the conviction expressed in

the words, "There is none like unto Thee, O Lord; Thou art great, and Thy name is great in might" (Jer. 10:6). The contemplation of God's power as the Maker of all things strengthened his confidence in God's ability to perform what He promised. "Ah, Lord God! behold, Thou hast made the heaven and the earth by Thy great power and stretched out arm, and there is nothing too hard for Thee" (32:17). That such reasoning was acceptable to God is shown by His taking up the words of His servant (v. 27, see also Acts 4:24).

The declaration, by the life and death of Christ, that "God is love," adds to all His revelation of Himself in the Old Testament, but in no way supersedes it. We need both. "Believe ye that I am able to do this?" was asked by Him who here on earth was acting for God and by His power. If we were asked such a question we would doubtless reply, as did the blind men, "Yea, Lord." Yet how often we are like those who, instead of ascribing greatness to our God, "limited the Holy One of Israel." How often the question arises in our hearts, Is God able to do this or that? We may scarcely allow it to ourselves; we would shrink from putting it into words; but down deep in the heart there it is.

"Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?" Can He interpose in this difficulty? Can He act for us when we walk in darkness and have no light? Let the record of His "wonders of old" assure us that He is able. He, who in the beginning made the heaven and the earth by His power, is able to interpose for His people as He pleases. He who spoke and caused the light to shine out of darkness is still able to speak and cause that "unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness."

The chief evidence of the

"power of God" repeated in the New Testament is resurrection--first, the resurrection of Christ, and then the resurrection of those who are Christ's at His coming. What a manifestation of God's greatness will be found when the Firstborn from the dead shall be surrounded by the many sons who are being brought to glory, each one bearing His own likeness! And what an acknowledgement on their part will there be of of the "power and might," as well as the grace, which they have proved in being delivered from the world, led through it as through a wilderness, and, finally set before His face forever. The new heaven and the new earth will be the everlasting expression of the power and greatness of the Creator, as well as of the wisdom and goodness of the God of all grace, and of the Lamb by whom that grace reached its blessed recipients (Rom. 5:17).