

WCCC2011

For Thine is the Power 1

Looking at God's Power from History

Brother Dana Congdon

Good afternoon, brothers and sisters, I just like to see how many of you are here for the first time this year. Please raise your hands so I can see. Well, where have you been for the last twenty-five years? You see this name here on the front? Do you know who George Fox is? Usually here in the northwest, we meet at a Lutheran university in Tacoma, Washington. But now this year, we have gone one hundred years ahead and we are meeting at George Fox. George Fox was a brother from England. And in about 1640, God revealed by His word the spiritual reality of the new birth. And so George Fox spent his whole life preaching the truth of following the Holy Spirit. And he spent many years in prison for this faith. Later in the 19th century three churches of the Quakers were established in this town of Newberg. And in 1890 they built this college for the glory of God. So last time we were at WCCC in the northwest, we were Lutherans but now we are Quakers.

We want to read some scriptures as we begin today. And I like us to begin in Genesis chapter 45 where Joseph was speaking to His brothers. Verse 5 *'now do not be grieved or angry with yourselves, because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life'*; and verses 7 - 9 *'God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant in the earth, and to keep you alive by a great deliverance. Now, therefore, it was not you who sent me here, but God; and He has made me a father to Pharaoh and lord of all his household and ruler over all the land of Egypt. Hurry and go up to my father, and say to him, 'Thus says your son Joseph, "God has made me lord of all Egypt; come down to me, do not delay'.* Then in chapter 50 were Joseph's last words to his brothers in verses 19 – 20, *'But Joseph said to them, "Do not be afraid, for am I in God's place? As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive.'* And we will read a few verses from Daniel, chapter 4. Here Daniel was telling King Nebuchadnezzar of the judgment waiting for him. We will read verses 25 and 26, *'and that you be driven away from mankind and your dwelling place be with the beasts of the field, and you be given grass to eat like cattle and be drenched with the dew of heaven; and seven periods of time will pass over you, until you recognize that the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind and bestows it on whomever He wishes. And in that it was commanded to leave the*

stump with the roots of the tree, your kingdom will be assured to you after you recognize that it is Heaven that rules’; then we have David’s testimony in Psalm 62, verses 11 and 12, ‘Once God has spoken; Twice I have heard this: That power belongs to God; And loving-kindness is Yours, O Lord, For You recompense a man according to his work.’ And then in Romans chapter 9, we have the testimony regarding Pharaoh, verses 17 and 18, ‘For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, “FOR THIS VERY PURPOSE I RAISED YOU UP, TO DEMONSTRATE MY POWER IN YOU, AND THAT MY NAME MIGHT BE PROCLAIMED THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE EARTH.” So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires’; II Peter chapter 3 verses 3, 4 and 9, ‘Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with their mocking, following after their own lusts and saying, “ Where is the promise of His coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation’; then verse 9 ‘The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance’; Habakkuk chapter 3, verses 1 – 4 ‘A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet, according to Shigionoth. LORD, I have heard the report about You and I fear. O LORD, revive Your work in the midst of the years. In the midst of the years make it known; In wrath remember mercy. God comes from Teman, And the Holy One from Mount Paran. His splendor covers the heavens, And the earth is full of His praise. His radiance is like the sunlight; He has rays flashing from His hand, And there is the hiding of His power.’ and then finally one verse in Matthew chapter 6, verse 22. ‘The eye is the lamp of the body; so then if your eye is single, your whole body will be full of light.’

Let us pray

Our Father we come to speak about Thy kingdom and we bow before Thee. It is Your kingdom; Yours is the power and Yours is the glory. Give us deeper revelation of the kingdom of God and may the King be enthroned in our midst. We pray in Jesus’ precious name. Amen.

The Prayer That The Lord Taught His Disciples

The Lord’s Prayer is very familiar to many millions of Christians. I was not a Christian until I was 20 years old. But by 6 years old, I have memorized the Lord’s Prayer because in the church I went to, they repeated it every service. I went to the church where they said forgive us our debts not trespasses but we all memorized this prayer. Now if we have a quiz today, how many of you have memorized this prayer? Raise your hands. You have to recite it completely. I see some people raising it half way. Our brother Stephen in his younger days already memorized this Lord’s Prayer. I don’t know about our brother Christian but since he memorizes everything, probably he knows that. It is spoken of all the time but what does it mean? I have memorized this prayer but I have no idea what it meant. The most popular use

of this prayer in Matthew chapter 6 is that it is a prayer formula to have your sins forgiven. Many people go to the Roman church when they confess their sins. Depending how bad their sins were, the priest would tell them to pray this prayer ten times every day. Now I was not Roman Catholic because for me it will be fifty times a day. I grew up among many people like this and they could even say the Lord's prayer in Latin. But it was just a magic formula. I remember when I went to seminary to study to be a minister, students were required to go to a speech class. Many times in such a school, they teach you lesson on the Lord's Prayer as to how to say it. It is because when you become the pastor and when you say the Lord's prayer, you have to know how to say it religiously. And so we were taught the prayer in three parts. The first part you have to speak very humbly. We said 'our Father,' oh, so humbly. When we make our petitions, we were supposed to lift our voice earnestly, praying especially for daily bread and for forgiveness and for deliverance from evil. And when you come to the end, Thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory you pressed in with your most reverent voice. And everybody knows that the prayer is almost over.

But what is this Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory? Is this a doctrine that you believe? Is this a statement of faith? Is it the reason we can ask and make request? What does it mean to us? Is it prayer? Do you pray that? Is it worship? You see the simple matter brings in so much. But the real question is that it is not the repeating of this prayer that has any redemptive value. It was our Lord Jesus, speaking to His disciples about kingdom reality. Is this real to you? Thine is the kingdom, Thine is the power and Thine is the glory. This should be the disciples' reality. This was the reality of our Lord Jesus when He was on earth. Everywhere our Lord Jesus went, you were touched by a kingdom reality. He preached the gospel of the kingdom of God. And as He preached there was a demonstration of kingdom power and at times one could see the glory of God in the Lord Jesus. Now of course, this was His reality because He was the King of the kingdom and in terms of power, He has all the power. He defeated Satan in the wilderness, He bound demons, He healed the sick, He raised the dead, and He rules over wind and waves. He was even master over the authorities in Jerusalem. He lived this kingdom life.

And for the church after Pentecost, the disciples lived in a daily reality of this kingdom. How about us? When our Lord spoke this prayer to the disciples in this simple prayer, He opened our understanding to two things. There are two great forces going on in their midst; the Father in heaven Who is King and Lord over all. His is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. But there were also things happening on the earth. There were the kingdoms of this earth; even the religious kingdoms of this world. These two things though separate, were then being united through Jesus Christ. Now the kingdom of heaven could touch the kingdom of this earth.

And the disciples suddenly realized that there was so much more to life than just walking on this earth. They were to walk on this earth but to take orders from heaven. They were going to have to understand

what it was to live the kingdom life as a reality while walking on this earth. And so the Lord spoke to His disciples many things concerning the kingdom of heaven. But it did not become real to them until the power came from on high and they realized the kingdom of heaven had come down on earth and in the church and they began to teach the gospel. And so the early disciples, these followers of the way began to teach and continued to teach the gospel of the kingdom of heaven.

The Gospel of the Kingdom

Now I want to briefly review what the gospel of the kingdom is because I see a number of young people here and there are some who are here for the first time. The gospel of the kingdom of heaven has four basic points. We can see these points by the sermons given to us in the Book of Acts.

Do you know what the gospel of the kingdom is? The first point is very important and today it is often not mentioned. The first point of the gospel of the kingdom is that God rules and reigns over all. He has created all things. He sustains all things. He blesses all things and He must be given account of by all mankind. He is the creator; we are the creatures; we must respond to His kingship. Now when you read the various messages of our brothers in the Book of Acts, you see Paul and the others were careful to bring up this point. So when Paul preached the gospel to the Gentiles in Athens he began with an unknown God and Paul told them He was the creator of everything in Whom all the people live and move and have their beings. And they had to be accountable to the judgment as to how they responded to this one, great God.

The second point of the gospel of the kingdom given to us by the prophets in the Old Testament is that God has a plan. He was planning to set a man upon the right hand of His power to reign in the kingdom forever and ever. So in the fullness of time, God would make heaven and earth one by the kingship of a glorious man sitting on the throne on the right hand of the Father.

The third point is that Jesus came as the king for His kingdom. And through His death, burial, resurrection and ascension and sitting down at the right hand of God, He defeated the usurper of the kingdom of this earth; He made an open show of principalities and power, and He opened a new and living way for many sons in glory.

Then the fourth point is for the people to repent and believe. Why do the people have to repent? It is because we have lived our lives independently of this God Who rules. And now it is time for the creature to cease his rebellion and to bow before God. And by faith in the King the Lord Jesus, those who repent and believe are transferred out of the kingdom of darkness and into the kingdom of God's beloved Son. Now this is a tremendous gospel. When we preach this gospel it has power. But when you preach this gospel it also produces conflict. You remember the passage we read in II Peter chapter 3; it really applies today, does it not? Speaking especially of this point one, if you tell people today God rules over you and

you are responsible for that, what will be the response of most of your friends who are in the world? Immediately they began to mock; where is this God? Where is this promise of His coming? Throughout the history of the world, everything has remained the same; there is no God over me. Today this world is full of mockers, but there is something interesting. In the first chapters of the Book of Acts, when the church was living in the kingdom reality, the people in Jerusalem were afraid of the church. They dared not visit casually this people of the way. This leads us to ask the question; is the church today living in the kingdom reality? Is God ruling over us? I think it is in the very first point of the gospel that we find there is the necessity today, even among the people of God, to repent.

God in Control of All

In Matthew chapter 6 where our Lord spoke of this prayer that we are studying, we read in this particular verse 22 that the disciples had a single eye for the kingdom. When we come to the problem of why we do not sense the kingdom today, the issue is whether we have a single eye. Remember the Lord Jesus said you cannot serve two masters. You cannot first seek His kingdom if you worry about what you can eat, what you can wear and where you shall live. But those who seek the kingdom and His righteousness first get a taste of the reality.

What is this single eye? Now for us, the single eye is to look to the Lord for everything. But down through the history in the scriptures, we can see there have been servants of God who had this single eye and it was this single eye that saw the power of God. These servants through history saw God sovereignly ruling and overruling in the affairs of men. Do you understand? Well most men walk through this life without an awareness of God's rulership in this world, but those who have a single eye can see it. In the lives of these servants, a revelation of the kingdom broke in upon their lives and they were never the same. And so our brother spoke of Abraham this morning and that after the glory of God appeared to him, he began to sense that God was ruling and reigning in His life. And so is the case with Isaac and Jacob.

We read in Genesis 45 of the case of Joseph; do you hear what He said? 'You my brothers are only seeing what is happening in the earthly frame, do you not know that God has ruled and overruled in everything that you have done? You meant for evil, God used it for good. You did not send me to Egypt, God sent me to Egypt to preserve a remnant. What did Joseph see? He saw a God who rules and overrules; a God who carries the life of His servant.

Abraham came to such a faith in the sovereignty of this power. Somehow he believed in the offering of His son Isaac; and in the sacrifice of Isaac somehow God would bring him back to life in a great powerful overruling. Now this story was continuous through the history of the Old Testament. Moses was standing before Pharaoh. Pharaoh was all powerful, Moses was nothing. Moses spoke to Pharaoh and

said ‘Pharaoh, God is using you to display His power’. And we have read a few verses from Daniel where King Nebuchadnezzar was all powerful, Daniel was nothing. But Daniel had the single eye. What did he say to Nebuchadnezzar? He said, ‘Nebuchadnezzar, you are the ruler, the king and Lord of all of this earth because God gave you this power. And if you would not recognize that it is He who has given you the power, then you would become as an animal and you would be humbled by the providential power of God until you recognize that His kingdom rules.’ Is that not amazing that Daniel could see through? He saw through the rising and falling of great empires throughout history until the kingdom of God comes down as a stone and destroy all the kingdoms of the world. What a view he had!

And we read in Psalm 62 of David’s testimony, ‘Once the Lord has spoken, twice I have heard, all powers belong to God’. But that is not just a statement of religious worship. David saw that the Lord has the power. Even as a young man when he stood against Goliath, he saw not Goliath but the God who rules over Goliath. When he became king and was going to go to war with the Philistine, he did not go to war right away; he asked the Lord first, ‘should I attack’? And both of our brothers have already pointed to David’s testimony in his latter days in Chronicles chapter 29. David gave tremendous wealth to God. And he said ‘everything I have, even this wealth has come by Thy power.’ Thine is the power and the greatness.

Do you see through in your life? Any of you have come to the United States seeking freedom and the living way? Our God is sovereign. And if you forget who has given you wealth, what does God do by His power? He sends us into a wilderness. In Deuteronomy chapter 8, Moses was talking to the children of Israel, and he said God has taken you through the wilderness; so that when you came into the land and God blessed you, you would not say my power has gotten me this wealth.

Brothers and sisters, we need that clear single eye to see who gets the glory to every single thing that happens in our life. Do you see the ruling and overruling God and that He is reigning over your life? We are talking about the power of God and yet we have not talked about any great demonstration of His power yet. But now I tell you a mystery. The greatest manifestation of the power of God is His sovereign providence in our lives. He is ruling and overruling in order to bring us to His desired end. Do you remember Peter’s sermon on the day of Pentecost? What did Peter say? I will put it very simply; you took Jesus and crucified Him; however, you did not really take Him; this was God’s predestined, foreordained plan; you put Him to death; but God has overruled and raised Him up again. Do you see you have been working against the purpose of God? Now repent. It was a very powerful message. Imagine you realize that all you have been doing about Jesus has been at cross purpose with the powerful, omnipotent God. The story goes on.

What is the Book of Acts? Is it not a testimony that our Lord Jesus is on the throne on the right hand of the Father and He is ruling and overruling through circumstances from Jerusalem to Judea to Samaria and

to the other parts of the world? He was moving man; He was saving the rebellious; He was performing miracles; He was overruling. Throughout it all we see God building His church.

And as Daniel said in chapter 4; when God moves, none can stay His hand. Of course we see this in the Book of Revelation. We see the Lamb on the throne; we see the scroll in His hand. We see him loosing the seal, sovereignly determining the destiny of this world. The bible speaks a great testimony of God's power. When we say Thine is the power, do we have this single eye of realizing everything He is doing today is towards His purpose in the end?

In these last days of great outward falling away, there are some who see that God is ruling and overruling in order to recover His testimony. In the church life we may see difficulties, failures, divisions; loss of life. But behind all these, we can still see God ruling and overruling to prepare a bride for His son. Our brothers and sisters, this is so crucial for us to understand; when God is moving, none can stay His hand. But we as His children can understand what He is doing and cooperate with him. Or we can be blind to what He is doing and find ourselves being overruled all the time. That is why when we say Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever, I think it needs to be said from the knees. And those who understand the meaning behind those words are those servants who are frequently found in a place of repentance. How God wants servants who yield to His rule.

God Wants to Share His Power

And here we enter into a mystery that is hard to understand. Why does He want us to see His purpose in all that is happening? It is because even though it is His kingdom yet He wants to share that kingdom; it is His power but He wants to delegate that power; it is His glory but He wants to show His glory. There is a great plan of God today. It is moving with power and providence. There is a flow and a purpose to all that is being done. If we see what He is doing, if we are adjusted to what He is doing so we can cooperate to what He is doing, then He delegates His power, giving authority to men. As our brother spoke last night, it is not only that God wants to demonstrate His power but He wants to demonstrate His power through men.

The Kingdom Reality

We mentioned all of these different men down through the ages including those in the early church; these men were taken up and carried by this tremendous vision. But we have to remark regarding the place of most of God's children. There were those who were faithful, but there were many, many more that spent their energy resisting God. As our Lord Jesus began to explain to His disciples this matter of discipleship in the kingdom, He warned them that if they keep their lives they are going to lose their lives; but if they give themselves to the Lord's purpose, they will discover their lives. We all know these words but are we

resisting our King? Are we controlling our own lives? Do our plans get in the way of God's plan? Are we controlling our environment over concern with mammon or food or drinks, finding ourselves in some kind of unbelief and worry over small things? And meanwhile there is a kingdom purpose that if we have taken up with, God will add all other things. Who can sense what God is doing today? His kingdom is very near.

Now I want to speak on one more matter regarding this kingdom that we live in today. I like you to turn back to that chapter in Habakkuk chapter 3. There is a little phrase in the end of verse 4 that I want to use to encapsulate my thoughts. And this verse speaks of the hiding of His power. This is important because the reality of the kingdom of the heavens that we live in today involves the hiding of His power. Now what does Habakkuk mean by this? You remember that Habakkuk was very upset when He saw the invasion of the Chaldeans and the Babylonians into Judea. He didn't understand what was happening. He needed vision. He stood on the wall to receive the vision. And God said 'I will give you vision and with this vision you can run through this desperate time'. Chapter 3 is what Habakkuk prayed and sang after he saw the vision because He understood the hiding of His power. What did God say? God said 'I will tell you what I am doing but you will not believe it. I am using the idolaters and the worldly Babylonians to discipline my people.' God in His sovereign power was about to use Babylon to discipline and purify His people. And Habakkuk saw it and He understood. Behind this whole thing was God's power irresistibly moving towards His purpose. When Habakkuk saw the absolute power of God, he did three things. First of all, he feared; I have heard the report of this and I fear. And yet because he saw what the Lord was up to, he could say, O lord, revive Thy work in the midst of this time. Was that not an incredible prayer? And he went beyond that and he said, 'in wrath remember mercy'.

Here was one who understood the hiding of His power. So he began to sing this song of how God has manifested His glory and has shown His power throughout the great moments in the history of Israel. And yet even in these moments where His power was manifested, it was only the hiding of His power. So why did God hide His power? Why does He not manifest it fully? It is because if He manifests it fully, none of us can survive. God said in Malachi, 'I am God; I change not; therefore the house of Jacob is not consumed'. Peter said in II Peter chapter 3: 9, 'God is hiding His power for mercy's sake, not wanting that any may perish but all may come to repentance'.

And in the kingdom of the heavens today where we live, there is the hiding of His power for the sake of mercy. It is not only mercy upon those in darkness in this world. This is the time for us to be faithful and preach the kingdom gospel that all that will be saved can come in. But the hiding of His power is also because of His mercy upon His people. When Jeremiah saw Jerusalem being destroyed, he wrote the Lamentations. Jeremiah saw the whole outward thing destroyed but he said in Lamentations 'by His mercy we are not consumed'.

Our God has no interest in just our outward things. If we move across purposes with His ways, you know our God does not need to destroy any one of us. He would just remove His spirit. As our brother shared this morning, the glory left the temple. And the temple carried on in those days just as in this day the church carries on. The church is in control of itself. The leaders are full of their plans; the people are satisfied. But we must realize these are the days of the hiding of His power because He is having mercy upon us. He removes the testimony. He removes His presence from our lives, from our assemblies. Do you see it? Leaders, look at our assemblies. What does that cost you to do? Brothers and sisters, look at our lives; our runaway lives. There is so much loss; so many coming across the purposes with God. God will rule over His people. And even today, in the midst of outward problems, the Lord is raising up hidden ones. These are those who know the Lord and fear; those who pray from the depth of their hearts 'Thy will be done in my life on earth'.

Oh, we understand today that God's power is not fully manifested and it is but to give us time to repent. God has a precious plan that will not be frustrated. God is using the events of these days here in our country. His overruling is a mercy to us. When He does not allow us to go our own way, it is a mercy to us. How the Lord wants to recover in His church His throne and His being the absolute Master. May this be a day when we seek first His kingdom and His righteousness. God is moving and none can stay His hand. Are you taken up in His purpose with the single eye on our Lord Jesus? The providential power of God – Thine is the power; all things will be brought to the light. So we cry for mercy.

Let us pray.

Our Father, we come here representing many different gatherings of your people and in various different states of disrepair and needs. Some of us are outwardly strong, but inwardly dead; some are under attack; small and yet your presence is with them. In these last days, we pray that those who are here even this week could hear what the spirit has to say to the church. In the day of Thy power, in the day of Thy coming, all things of Your power will be revealed. O God, You are Lord, King and Master, and we fear. We pray 'revive us Lord, in the midst of these years and even in wrath remember mercy'. This alone will give us the life we need up in the high places with hind's feet. This alone will allow us to rejoice in our God of salvation even if our barns are empty. Press in upon us with the renewed vision of your kingdom purpose; help us, conform us to your way. We pray in the name of our King and Lord, Jesus Christ. Amen.