

Power & Love Part 1

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[0 : 0 0] God is powerful and that's one of the reasons why the Samus uses various descriptions to describe God in terms of strength and power. The Samus speaks of God as a rock, a fortress, a refuge, a mighty rock and all of these things should stimulate our minds to think about the magnitude of the power of God and as we do that I want us just to try and stretch our minds for a wee while this morning to think of in terms of God's power and we're going to say four things briefly. The first thing we're going to say is that God's power is inherent. God has inherent power. Now this is one of the fundamental differences between God and everything else because if you look at the world around us, if you look at anything, you can see that everything is dependent on another power. Nothing has inherent power in and of itself. Everything around us functions and operates through the transfer of power from one thing to another. Nothing has the power it needs in and of itself. Everything works by transfer of power.

For example your phone. When you get home at night your phone has to be charged up again and it does that because it doesn't have inherent power. It has to rely on the charging of its batteries. Same as something like a generator. You think of something that generates all the electricity that we consume each day even as we're consuming right now in the lights and the heaters and in the PA system. That comes from the generation, the generating systems of the national grid but all of these have to use resources. Whether they're using fuel in a diesel generator, diesel power station, whether using coal in a coal fired power station, whether it's natural resources like wind, whether it is nuclear power.

All of these things are not creating power. They're just transferring power from the fuel to the national grid or whatever it may be. We can only transfer energy. We can't create it in and of itself. So we cannot create power yet we need it. Every day we need it. We all need food. We need heat. Everything that functions around us needs power. Even when you look at things with immense power like a nuclear reaction, you can only use the fuel once and then it's spent. It has to be replaced with further resources. Nothing automatically replenishes its own power. Now that, I'm sure, makes perfect sense and it seems to apply across the board. But it doesn't apply to God. This is where God is different. God has inherent power in and of itself. Isaiah 40 speaks about this.

Have you not known? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary. Now the sun is immensely powerful but it is constantly fainting and growing more and more weary. We know that. Science tells us that. That it is bit by bit, only tiny bit by tiny bit by bit by bit it's using up its power. That never happens to God. God's power can never be used up. This is why God is unique compared to any other thing in all creation. And this is why any explanation for the existence of the universe makes no sense when it removes God from the equation.

Because if we remove God we look at everything around us that has an inherent dependence on the power of other things. Everything depends on something else. And yet when we remove God we find no source, no starting point for the power that is evident around us. It only makes sense if we believe and understand that everything comes from the God who has inherent power. Now that of course applies at a cosmic scale in terms of the universe but it also applies in terms of God's ability to care for you. God has a power that never grows weary in terms of protecting you, in terms of listening to you, in terms of being your God. He never grows weary, he never grows faint and that is the power with which he cares for us. So that's the first point. God's power is inherent in and of himself, he's powerful. The second point is that God's power is supreme.

[5 : 16] God's power is not just unique because it is inherent in and of itself, himself. It is also unique because it is at a superior level to any other power. God's power is superior. And this is what we learn from the doctrine of creation. God has made everything that there is including every other power. Every power that we see in the world, whether it's gravity, whether it's the wind, whether it is in terms of chemical power, every single power has been created by God.

That means that it is a subordinate power in comparison to God's power. God has supreme power. And Paul reminds us in Romans 1 that that is evident in the creation that's all around us. His invisible attributes, namely his eternal power and divine nature have been clearly perceived ever since the creation of the world in the things that have been made. In other words, look at the world around you. There is a power that made that world and that is God. Likewise, I say F40 again, lift up your eyes on high and see who created these. He brings out their hosts by number, calling them all by name by the greatness of his might because he is strong in power. Not one is missing. Whenever you look in creation you are being reminded of the power of God. And if you go home and read Genesis chapter 1 that describes the creation of the world, it is remarkable how almost effortless it is for God. And that's why I want us, as I said, to stretch our minds because if you stretch your minds and imagine this universe being created in all its vastness, you think of the power involved in that, you think of the transformation that was taking place as matter and light and all of these things came into being and God just spoke it and it happened. Absolutely effortless. And that is why God's power is at a completely different level to anything else that we know. God alone has that power to create and any other power that exists only exists because God permits them to. And so we must never ever forget that God's power is at a supreme level, a different level to anything else. But it's also a reminder that because God's power is at this supreme level, God can never ever be threatened by another power. His power is unreachable to any other power. God cannot be threatened. Now the Bible speaks about many powers that oppose us. For example in Ephesians 6-12 we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. And the Bible makes it fundamentally clear that in the created realm there is this ongoing battle between the powers of good, the kingdom of God and the powers of evil. And we are caught up in the middle of that battle and we see the evidence of that battle everywhere. I don't have to convince any of you that the power of evil is incredibly strong to this day. But in the face of that you and I must never ever forget that no power is a match to God's supreme power. That's why in Psalm 2 it says this. The beginning of Psalm 2 describes those who kind of oppose God and almost fight against God. And God's response is this in verse 4. He who sits in the heavens laughs. The Lord holds them in division. Now that is really important. It's not saying that God is sort of mocking the world in a shallow way, that God would never do that. But instead it is emphasising that any suggestion that

God can be threatened, any suggestion that God can be overpowered, any suggestion that God is somehow subordinate to any other force or power in this world, any suggestion of that sort is nothing but a joke. It is an absolute joke because God's power is supreme and nothing else can compare. And I don't know about you but I wish, I wish that our leader and I wish that our media would listen to that and would understand it. God's power is inherent. God's power is supreme but thirdly God's power is consistent. Now this is a really, really important point.

In fact it's an incredibly precious truth. God is consistently powerful. Now that reminds us of a couple of things. First of all it reminds us that God's power is continually operating within his creation. In other words God didn't just start off the world and then leave it to do its own thing and forget about it. Some people argue that God did that but the Bible does not teach that. God is continually active in caring for his creation. That's what we mean when we talk about God's providence. Continually, constantly, actively sustaining the world.

Hebrews 1.3 says that he upholds the universe by the word of his power. He doesn't just make it, he looks after it and he cares for it. And God's power in providence is absolutely astounding. You look at the world, you can see God's power at work in massive, massive ways. You see the endless, consistent cycle of seed time of harvest, of seasons, of the planets orbiting one another, of the earth turning, of the moon orbiting our own planet. All these things consistently, regularly, faithfully happening. There's an order, there's a structure, there's a wonderful, wonderful consistency to it all. And that is no accident. It is God upholding, sustaining his creation. So you see it in massive ways that God is providentially looking after his creation. But the amazing thing is that we also see it in tiny little ways. Tiny little ways in our own lives, like Jesus said, are not too sparrows sold for a penny and not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your father. But even the hairs of your head are all numbered.

[12 : 53] You think of the millions of, and billions of birds that there must be in the world and not one, not one can fall to the ground unnoticed. And you think of the hairs on your head. God has numbered them all. And that reminds us that God is consistently faithfully caring for us in every detail of our lives. And we praise and thank Him for that. So God's power is consistent in the sense that it is ongoing in His care for its creation. But God's consistent power is also a reminder of His character. It's a reminder that God acts consistently. Now this is a really important point because this is one of the key differences between God and all of the other false gods that were followed in the Old Testament. In the Old Testament, the surrounding nations had all sorts of false gods. And these false gods were what we call capricious, which means they were like unstable. They were wild. They were volatile. You didn't know what they were going to do from one day to the next. One day they might have favor on you. The next day they might not. One day they might be good. The next day they might be evil. And these gods were fighting with one another. These gods were utterly and totally unpredictable. They were capricious. And people still view gods, God like that, or gods that they believe in like that today. For example,

Islam places a huge emphasis on the sovereignty of God. Now a Muslim will say God is absolutely sovereign. God is in charge. Now we would agree with that.

Of course we would. But their idea of God's sovereignty is that God is sovereign and so basically God can do whatever he likes, whenever he likes. And for that reason, the Muslim will say you can be saved in the morning and you can be lost in the evening. You could be one of God's people in the morning and then by the evening he might have changed his mind and thrown you away. And he can do that if he wants to do it. Their view of God is that his sovereignty means he can do whatever he wants and that's why they're constantly trying to make sure that their lives are not doing anything to provoke God to do something horrible to them. Because as far as they're concerned, God can do whatever he likes.

The God of the Bible, the God that we believe in, is magnificently and beautifully different to what Muslims and what the false religions of the Old Testament would say because our God is utterly consistent and that means that God's power will always, always conform to his character. That is why God cannot lie. That is why God cannot look upon evil and that is why God cannot turn you away if you come to him and that is why God cannot let you go if you are his.

And that's where we find assurance because the Christian would, can never say on the basis of the Bible, oh well I can be saved in the morning and lost in the evening because our God keeps his promises. Our God is utterly consistent and there are some things that our God cannot do and we worship him because of that. God cannot lose you if you are his. God cannot lie to you. God cannot break a promise to you and I hope you see the absolute wonder of that. That the God who can simply speak and fling every star into the billions of galaxies that are in our universe. The God that has the power to do that does not have the power to break a promise to you because that would go against his character because God's power is consistent. God's power is consistent. So that's our first three things. His power is inherent, his power is supreme, his power is consistent. Fourthly, his power is active. God's power is active. We see this in a general sense. God says my counsel shall stand and I will accomplish all my purposes. If God wants to do something he achieves it. God does not just exist in the realm of theory, he acts, he puts things into practice. And the area where we see this most clearly and most wonderfully is in the redemption of his people. In other words, God actively uses his power to save us.

[17 : 57] As Psalm 106 verse 8 says, yet he saved them for his name's sake that he might show, might make known his mighty power. And that's why the Exodus from Egypt in the Old Testament is a brilliant foreshadowing of God's redemption through Jesus Christ because it is an act of power whereby he saved his people. And most of all we see this in the person and work of Jesus Christ. In saving you and I, God was using his power. That's why Paul calls the Gospel the power of God and to salvation. God is using his power for our benefit. Now we could say many things in this area but what I want to, where I want us to focus our minds is in what is without doubt the greatest demonstration of power that the world has ever seen. And that is the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Now we can talk about Jesus' resurrection with an element of familiarity because we have heard about it many times and I, I quite sure and I certainly hope that none of us question its truth. But familiarity can sometimes make, mean that we forget the sheer impossibility of resurrection from the dead in mere human terms. Dead people stay dead. It's impossible, impossible for somebody to be resurrected unless well it will come to that in a moment. Death is the most powerful force that we see at work on a daily basis if you like. The power of death is as unstoppable today as it ever was. You think of every single medical advance we have made has done nothing but prolong the arrival of death. Nobody has prevented it, nobody has reversed it. Humanity is powerful in so many ways but in the face of death we are powerless. And you and I know that and that is what makes death so horrendous because you can see it coming and you can't do anything. You can't do anything.

Humanity is powerless in the face of death but God isn't. And God is different in this area. And this is why though we say that resurrection is utterly impossible it is impossible unless God intervenes. And that is exactly what God has done because when God himself died on the cross in the Persian of his son Jesus Christ death could not hold him. That's what Peter says in Acts chapter 2. God raised him up, loosened the pangs of death because it was not possible for him to be held by it. Now every single one of us will be held by the power of death and it's not possible for us to do anything about it but it is not possible for death to hold God and Jesus could not be held by it. Indeed Jesus only laid down his life because he had the power to do so. I lay my down my life that I may take it up again. No one takes it from me but I lay it down on my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and I have authority to take it up again. This charge

I've received from my father that's why Jesus did not die until his work was finished. And Jesus' resurrection is just an immense and wonderful display of God's power and the New Testament repeatedly speaks of the resurrection in terms of power. Have you noticed this before? It says Jesus was declared to be son of God in power according to the Spirit of Holiness by his resurrection from the dead. Jesus Christ our Lord, he's the one declared in power. He was crucified in weakness but lives by the power of God and in Philippians C-10 that I may know him and the power of his resurrection. The resurrection tells me how God, how powerful God is. Death is the most powerful enemy that you and I have but it is no match for the power of God and that is why the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation and why the Gospel is the most amazing message that the world has ever heard. So power belongs to God but the second thing also belongs to God according to the Psalm. Power belongs to God and to you O Lord belongs steadfast love. Steadfast love. And what is God's love like? What is God's love like? Well you know we said four things about God's power we can see exactly the same four things about God's love but I'll try and do it much more quickly than I did with God's power. God's power is inherent, God's love is also inherent. That's what we mean when we say that God is love at the very core of

God's being is love and that is why God is the source of love. He is the starting point for our relationship with him. We love because God first loved us. God is inherently loving. He is the source of love. He is the cause of love. He is the creator of love. God is inherently loving and that is why we can say that as God's people everything that God does for us is an act of love. If you're a Christian everything that happens in your life, every act of God in your life is an act of love. You think how can that be true? Well here's what Paul says in Romans 8 28. We know that for those who love God all things work together for good. Now when Paul says all things he does not mean some things. He means all things and throughout every moment of your life God is acting towards you in love. He is blessing us, guiding us, strengthening us, comforting us, disciplining us all because he loves us. We can often think that when things go wrong when things are difficult that it's an evidence of God's love being removed but the opposite is true because as Hebrews 12 6 tells us the Lord disciplines the one he loves and you must must must against set your mind to grasp that point. God's love for you is not based on what you're doing, not based on the fact that you're improving your life, not based on the fact that you're getting a few things right, not based on the fact that he feels sorry for you, not based on the fact that you are earning his love. God loves you because inherent to the being of God himself is a loving, a thoroughly loving nature towards you as his people. God is love, God is inherently loving and he deals with us according to that love. But God's love is not just inherent, God's love is also supreme. Now again this is a vital, vital truth. We must grasp the fact not just that God has this inherent loving nature but that God's love is the absolute pinnacle of love itself. The absolute pinnacle of love is God's love. Now Paul makes a remarkable statement in Ephesians chapter 3 and we're going to read to try and grasp this. You see the underlying words of the ones we're going to home in on but we'll read these three verses. So that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith that you being rooted and grounded in love may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge that you may be filled with the fullness of God. Do you see the wonder of what

Paul is saying here? He is saying that the love of Christ surpasses knowledge. It's saying that the love of Christ is beyond anything that we can describe. It is beyond the realms of knowledge. It is at the absolute pinnacle of our levels of consciousness and of understanding. God's love is utterly supreme. It surpasses knowledge but he is also saying that you and I can know it. You can know what is impossible to fully know. You can know the very thing that surpasses knowledge and the only way I can explain what Paul is saying there is to say that when you get a glimpse of the love of Christ it will blow your mind.

[28 : 09] Paul is saying in verse 19 that Christ's love is mind-blowing because when we know it we are knowing the very thing that surpasses knowledge and no mind and no brain and no understanding is sufficient to contain it. God's love is at the absolute supremest level possible and if you can't see that or if you struggle to see that or if you've forgotten then pray to God show me, teach me, help me to see. So God's love is supreme, God's love is inherent, thirdly God's love is consistent. This is what we are reminded of by the wonderful translation that Sam 92 uses where it says steadfast love. This is the Hebrew word for God's covenant love, a love that is totally committed, a love that is eternally unchanging, a love that is uncompromisingly steadfast. Now this is a vital point, God's love for you is consistent. Now when we hear the word consistent we can sometimes think that the word consistent means sort of mediocre. Sometimes you can talk about football players and you have the ones who are absolutely brilliant like Messi or Cristiano Ronaldo or someone like that who are utterly amazing and then you have the other ones who they'll say well he's consistent. He's not necessarily a Messi, he's not necessarily a

Cristiano Ronaldo but he's consistent. We can think of that the word consistent in terms of almost in terms of being steady but not spectacular but you have to remember what we have just said. God's love is at the pinnacle of supremacy, God's love is at the highest highest level, so high your mind and my mind cannot contain it. God's love is at the very very top and God's love consistently stays there. God's love for you is consistently at that level. Now this is vitally vitally important for us to grasp because we can so often think that God's love for us at conversion will be a peak. We're converted, we're saved, that's what God's wants and that's when sometimes we're most conscious of God's love and then after that it kind of tails off. Maybe as it sometimes does in relationships in this world people start off full of passion and love for one another and then things steady off and peter out. That is not how God's love works. God's love for you is at the very pinnacle and it stays there throughout every stage of your life. God's love never grows cold, God's love for you is never in half measure. God's love is supremely consistent and it is consistent in its supremacy. That is how much God loves you and this reminds us of the fact that God's love is worked out in a personal relationship. That is what's bringing us back to the verse that we read at the very beginning where

Paul writes, the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and who gave himself for me. God's love for you is utterly personal but your relationship with him has got to be personal. Now by that I don't mean private, I don't mean that it's something that should be kept secret that's just between you and God, I mean that it's something that you personally must engage in. You must personally express to God your commitment and say to him, I trust you, I want to follow you, I want to live for you. Now when you pray that prayer by all means add on the end of it but please help me because we need God's help but you and I must make that personal commitment to God. It's not enough just to know about God's love, it's not enough just to believe that it's true. You and me, we must make that personal commitment ourselves and we mustn't over complicate it because it is not complicated. All you have to do is make Paul's testimony your testimony. Paul is beautifully talking about himself in this verse. He says that Jesus loved me and gave himself for me and that's the life I now live. You make that your testimony. The life I now live, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me. God's love for us is utterly consistent, it is utterly consistent and there's nowhere else we can go to find that level of consistency. So we've done three things, God's love is inherent, God's love is supreme, God's love is consistent. Lastly God's love is active. This is a reminder of the wonderful truth in the Bible that love is not worked out in theory, it is worked out in practice. God's love is shown in action. Look at these versions, God so loved the world that he gave his only son. In this is love, not that we have loved God that he loved us and sent his son. God showed his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Do you see the wonderful progression in these versions where the statements of God's love are all followed by a verb. God expresses his love and then he says I've done something based on that love. I love the world therefore I gave. God has loved us therefore he sent. God shows his love for us in that while you and I were still sinners Christ died. God's love is always shown in action.

And I want you to see the wonder of this. God's love is supreme, God's love is inherent in that he is the source of it. God's love is supreme and that is at the highest level. God's love is consistent in that it will go on and on and on and on and on and that means that there is nothing, nothing that God will not do for you to be saved. And the reality of that is proved by the cross. Because there on the cross Jesus died. There on the cross God himself went through the gates of death for you and for me. God's love went into action to the very limit.

Jesus' love is so active that it culminated in, culminated in him hanging motionless and lifeless on the cross. There is no limit to how far God was willing to go because of his love for you. If you want to know what real love is, if you want to know what the pinnacle of love is, look at the cross. Time has run away with us. These two attributes are wonderful. God's power, God's love. And there is another amazing truth that these verses contain and we're going to come back to that next Lord's Day all being well. To sum up I want you to remember two things. That on the cross we see the greatest demonstration of God's love and at the resurrection we see the ultimate revelation of God's power. And so when we think of these things we can join with the psalmist and we can say power belongs to God and to you, O Lord, belongs steadfast love. And these things are an immense source of comfort to us. Power belongs to God, steadfast love belongs to God. The only question that remains is do you belong to God? Amen.

[37 : 29] Let us pray.