



Title: Stabilizing Truths, Part 2
Theme: The Greatness of God

“I will proclaim the name of the LORD. Oh, praise the greatness of our God! He is the Rock, His works are perfect, and all His ways are just. A faithful God who does no wrong, upright and just is He. (Deuteronomy 32:3-4)

This passage of Scripture is found in the “Song of Moses” with the opening verse saying, “Listen, O heavens, and I will speak; hear, O earth, the words of my mouth.” (Deuteronomy 32:1)

I would propose to you that there are four different truths that the Holy Spirit wants you to grasp about the “Greatness of God.” When the Lord is allowed to illuminate these truths into the child of God, He will declare the greatness of God, announcing the Lord as strong and stable, as one who can be relied upon.

Just what does the Bible say about the “Greatness of God?”

Enjoying the Sovereignty of God

The first truth to grasping and enjoying the greatness of God is to rest in the Sovereignty of God. In the New Testament we read three times of God being addressed in prayer and the people crying out to God praying, “O Sovereign Lord.” (Luke 2:29; Act 4:24; Revelations 6:10; International Dictionary of the Bible Encyclopedia)

The application of the Greek word for “Sovereign Lord” (*despotes*) has been used by slaves in referring to their masters, slaves who are totally subjected to their master’s control over them. God being addressed as “Sovereign Lord,” projects the idea that the people petitioning Him consider themselves as slaves purchased and owned by Jesus Christ, people subjected to His absolute control over everything. (Practical Word Studies in the New Testament) The term means that He alone is God and no person, no being, nor ruling power, visible or invisible, physical or spiritual is outside of His hand to be blessed or cursed. He is above all and has authority over all things. (Romans 8:38-39; Colossians 1:16-17)

In saying “Sovereign Lord” Christians become like Paul, getting revelation and illumination of what God told Moses at the time he interceded on behalf of the Israelites when they had Aaron make the Golden Calf and they worshiped it. (Exodus 32-33) This is what God told Moses about His dealing with a stiff necked people, “I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.” (Exodus 33:19; Romans 9:15)

If the Lord God would have acted solely on His Justice He would have killed all the Israelites for their turning away from Him instead of letting many of them live. In regards to God's Sovereignty working in the free will of mankind, the Holy Spirit moved the Apostle Paul to write, "It does not, therefore, depend on man's desire or effort, but on God's mercy. For the Scripture says to Pharaoh: 'I raised you up for this very purpose, that I might display my power in you and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth.'" (Romans 9:16-17) Therefore God has mercy on whom He wants to have mercy, and He hardens whom He wants to harden... What if God, choosing to show His wrath and make His power known, bore with great patience the objects of His wrath--prepared for destruction? What if He did this to make the riches of His glory known to the objects of His mercy, whom He prepared in advance for glory -- (Romans 9:18-23)

The inscrutable sovereignty of God is manifested, not so much in the punishment of the reprobate, but in His gracious ability to draw sinful mankind to Himself. Those who enjoy the sovereignty of God are those who can rest with the fact that there are people out there who have no longing to respond to the Holy Spirit's drawing to Christ and to the ways of God. Yet, God can still work through them to accomplish His will and bring glory unto Himself and His Son. The Lord is fully able as He chooses to work through those who oppose Him as well as through those who trust and obey Him.

In His sovereignty God gave Pharaoh just what He wanted, a hard heart. In Exodus chapter 8 verses 15 and 32 we read of Pharaoh hardening his own heart. In Exodus 9:34-35 we read of Pharaoh and his officials hardening their own hearts against what God was doing in some of the plagues through which the Lord was showing Himself as the all powerful God. In six other passages of Scripture we read of God hardening Pharaoh's heart. (Exodus 4:21; 7:3; 9:12; 10:20,27; 11:10)

On the basis of the whole of Scripture, this does not mean God caused Pharaoh to sin and to be unyielding to the will of God. God never tempts mankind to sin, James 1:13-14 says this about man's sinfulness, "When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He tempt anyone; but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death."

Our Sovereign Lord judged Pharaoh just as he would any other man. Pharaoh heard the truth, saw God clearly working, showing Himself as supreme. Pharaoh "sowed" a hardened heart thus he reaped a hardened heart. Galatians 6:7-8 says, "Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life." Therefore, God made Pharaoh, his officials and his entire army into vessels of wrath showing the ultimate end of those who are against God's divine will.

God also makes vessels of noble uses. He took a man who was once named Saul, who persecuted the church. The Lord revealed Himself to Saul. Saul chose not to retain his hard heart but allowed the Lord to do a work in his heart and life. He became Paul and the Lord made him vessel of God to take the gospel to the gentiles. (Romans 11:13; Galatians 2:8; 1 Timothy 2:7) He wrote thirteen epistles that still are being powerfully used by the Holy Spirit.

Christians who grasp the greatness of God say as the apostle Paul did, "...I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want." (Philippians 4:11-12)

God is great because He is sovereign, He does all things well, He is in absolute control at all times and He is going to accomplish all that He says for the good of His kingdom. In His Sovereignty our great God still works today in the lives of people who are willing to walk in His plans for them.

Gregory Dawson wrote about two businessmen who sat on a porch in front of their small dying business. One partner spoke to the other and said, "How much longer do you think we can keep going like this." The man continued with, "You know, I would not mind losing the business if I could just do what I always wanted to do, study law. I would sure like to sell this business and pay all the bills and have just enough money left to buy just one book, a 'Blackstone's Commentary on English Law.'"

At that very moment a strange-looking wagon came up the road. The driver stopped in front of the porch and said, "I am trying to move my family out west and we are out of money. I have a good old barrel here that I could sell for \$.50 cents. As the owner of the dying business took a look at the old barrel, he took notice of a woman who looked at him pleadingly. Her face was thin and she showed sure signs of fatigue and hunger. He reached in his pocket and took out the last fifty cents he had and purchased the barrel.

Late into the evening His partner kept giving him a hard time about buying the old barrel. The man who purchased the barrel decided to take a look into the barrel and he saw something in the bottom. He fumbled around in the loose papers until he hit something hard. He pulled out a book and stood dumbfounded as he held a "Blackstone's Commentary on English Law." The man who purchased the barrel with his last fifty cents was Abraham Lincoln who latter became one of the best presidents America has had. During the Civil War he became a Christian who wrote, "It is the duty of nations as well as of men to own their dependence upon the overruling power of God and to recognize the sublime truth announced in the Holy Scriptures and proven by all history, that those nations only are blessed whose God is the Lord."

There are two types of people in this world. There are those who long to retain a hard heart, thus becoming vessels of wrath, and those who will surrender their lives into the Lord's hands enjoying God's Sovereign complete control over all things. In His Sovereignty He is making vessels of wrath and vessels for His noble uses. All Christians have the possibility of going down in history as Paul and Abraham Lincoln did, men who enjoyed the greatness of God.

His ever-present help

God is great in His Sovereignty and He is great because of His ever-present help. The Bible says, "God is our refuge and strength an ever-present help in trouble." (Psalm 46:1) The Lord says, "So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand." (Isaiah 41:10)

This is a wonderful promise of deliverance. Christians have work to do and they have an adversary who works hard to bring discouragement to hinder the works of Christ as He works through His faithful servants. The Lord is effectual help in the training, equipping, and providing for all that the child of God is called to do. He is powerful or superlative in difficulties. Psalm 46:1 is the key text to this division of the message as well as a song that celebrates the presence of God in the believer. Three metaphors that describe His ever-presence are, 1.) Refuge. 2.) Strength and 3.) Fortress. (Psalm 46:1, 7, 11)

As our "refuge" (*mahseh*) He is a person Christians can trust. (A Commentary, Critical and Explanatory, on OT and NT; International Standard Bible Encyclopedia) This trust gives Christians a sure hope and an ability to relax in the trials of this age. In every storm of life Christians are able to put their trust in the Lord because they have found Him to be that place of refuge.

Psalmists in the Bible often presented the need for the children of God to just commit their destiny to the Lord and allow Him to govern every part of their lives, to be confident that God's love and justice will determine every outcome.

Psalm 25 is a prayer Psalm that reflects the heart of a man who is after God's own heart. It is believed by many that this prayer came about late in David's life after he had experienced God's forgiveness, experienced the Lord's comfort in the midst of trials and seen God's protective hand from his enemies. In this Psalm there is a verse that shows the trust that David had developed in God. The King James Bible has the best translation with, "O keep my soul, and deliver me: let me not be ashamed; for I put my trust in thee." (Psalm 25:20) The child of God who lives a life of repentance before the Lord can make this same profession and have the same desire toward God as King David.

In regards to the Lord being the Christian's "strength" (*oz*) He becomes the Christian's strength for service and in trials. The Holy Spirit moved David to write, "For Thou has been a refuge for me, a tower of strength against the enemy." (Psalm 61:3 NAS) I love the way the King James Bible put what the Apostle Paul came to understand in living for and working with the Lord Jesus, "I can do all things through Christ which [strengthens] me." (Philippians 4:13) "Strengthen" (*endunamoo*) means to be made strong or vigorous to accomplish all that the Lord is calling you to do and/or withstand all that comes against you.

Fanny Crosby was made blind after a doctor gave her the wrong medicine at six weeks of age for a minor eye inflammation. In this tragedy she did not grow up bitter, but set her heart focus on God and she enjoyed His strength to accomplish what many could not accomplish.

Trusting in the Lord gave her strength to compose over 8,000 songs that reflect joy and the Lord's power. She looked through her disability which came about after the carelessness of a doctor and found strength in the Lord. Her work is still a blessing in the Lord's church today. (Source: Jeff Strite)
(Psalm 46:11)

All Christians who surrender to the Sovereignty of God in their lives will find His strength to accomplish all that He has called them to do for His glory and for the edifying of the Body of Christ. These Christians also discover that His ever-present help is a fortress. "Fortress" (*misgah*) means having the Lord as a safe haven or a place of protection. Psalm 46:11 says, "The LORD Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress."

Let us understand that God's presence is with us and all creatures, the sea and land are at His beckoning and command. Jesus is with us, He acts with us and His promise is never to leave us. Even if the devil himself bolts his gates against the work God has called us to do we do not need to be afraid. We are under the protection of God and our proclamation is, "If God is for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31b) The Holy Spirit moved the Apostle Paul to write about our foundation in Christ, thus, making Him our strong hold, even if everyone is slipping and falling all round us.

Paul writes, "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose. For those God foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those He predestined, He also called; those He called, He also justified; those He justified, He also glorified." (Romans 8:28-30)

F. B. Meyer wrote about two Germans who wanted to climb the Matterhorn. They hired three guides and began their ascent at the steepest and most slippery part. The men roped themselves together in this order: Hired guide, traveler, hired guide, traveler and lastly hired guide. They had not gone far when the least experienced guide, the one bringing up the rear, lost his footing. He was kept

from falling to his death the other four, because each one had a toehold in the niches they had cut in the ice.

Soon the next three slipped and fell. The front man, the most experienced climber, had sensed the danger and he drove a long spike deep into the ice, thus anchoring down so as to hold all of them secure until all who had slipped under the dangerous conditions could get back on their feet.” (Lou Nicholes, Our Daily Bread)

All of us are like those five men. We are in dangerous territory and we can slip at any time, but thank God Christians are bound in a living partnership to Christ. He stands even after taking on the sins of the world so we will never perish as long as we stay connected to Him. He is our stronghold in our ascent to higher ground in the Lord’s work and in living the Christian life.

His truths remain the same

God is great because His ever-present help is available to Christians at all times in life and because His truths remain the same. Malachi 3:6 says, "I the LORD do not change. So you, O descendants of Jacob, are not destroyed." (Malachi 3:6a)

We have here a declaration about the Lord God, His attribute is changeless and He will ultimately have a people who serve Him in a true God-fearing manor who will inherit His promises. As Malachi continues in his instruction to the people of God, he reminds them that they have a tendency to turn from the things of God and He gives them a promise of returning His favors upon them when they return to Him. (Malachi 3:6)

Keeping this passage of Scripture with the context of which it is written we must understand that there is a real danger of backsliding in our relationship with the Lord as we live down here. The Apostle Peter writes about making one’s calling and election sure; “For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But if anyone does not have them, he is nearsighted and blind, and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins. Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never fall, and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” (2 Peter 1:5-10)

God is great because He promises to keep a remnant of true servants of the Lord. Christians, who will plant the seeds of God's Word, and pray for His work to be accomplished so that the making of disciples of Christ will continue on. (Isaiah 10:20-23; Jeremiah 32:38-39; Matthew 28:18-20) God's plan from the beginning was to save people from their sins and have a people who are hungry for His righteousness, feed on His Words and walk in fellowship of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. That will never change. (Matthew 28:18-20)

He is Faithful

God is great because His truths and eternal plan are unchanging, He will continue His work and we can be a part of it. He is also great because He is Faithful. The Bible says, "Know therefore that the LORD your God is God; He is the faithful God, keeping His covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love Him and keep His commands." (Deuteronomy 7:9) God is faithful to extend His love to one generation after another because it is His character to love, not because of the excellent of His people.

He is faithful to His covenant treaty and He will keep His promise to those who love Him into the distant future. He is faithful to those who express their love by reading and obeying the written Word of God.

Everyone who is connected with Christ in some way wants to be an effective part in the Great Commission. One man got to enjoy God's love as others walked in obedience to the Lord's command, "Love one another as I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." (John 13:34-35)

I recently read about a man who had experienced God's love through different people during his three day stay in the hospital after being in a stolen car wreck. One day he said to the hospital chaplain, "I am beginning to see what [God's love] is all about. I saw it in the care in the Christian nurses who cared for me. I have seen it in my parents' eyes who never left my side, even when I was living wrong, outside of God's will. I saw in the faces of those who came to visit. I saw it in those who forgave me for what I did to their car and for the hurt I caused them. I guess I found what [love] was all about by looking at people who knew what [God's love] was about. A love that upholds and surrounds me, the love of God through Christ instilled in each life [lived for Him.]" (Tim Zingale)

Let Christians proclaim the greatness of God because of His Sovereignty. He is in absolute control and able to glorify His name through vessels of wrath or vessels of noble use. He is an ever-present help, He is our refuge, our strength and our fortress. His truths remains the same, he will keep a remnant faithful to Himself. Lastly, He is faithful in showing His love to a thousand generation of those who love Him and express that love by obeying His commands.