

The Wisdom of Men vs. The Power of God

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Bible Text: 1 Corinthians 2:3-5
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We'll begin today as customary and go to our text and read our text first and then ask the Lord's blessing upon it. Our text this morning comes from 1 Corinthians 2:3, 4, 5.

3 And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. 4 And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: 5 That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.

Let us pray.

Dear heavenly Father, how glorious thou art. How faithful thou art. How good thou art. O Lord, what a blessing it is to be amongst thy people through a week filled with sickness and many things, Lord, providentially that would come to make it hard upon all of us here but, Lord, in thy faithfulness, thou has brought us. I thank thee, Lord, for thy healing and thank you, Lord, for thy strength. I pray, O Lord, in this hour and the hour to come for thy presence to be with us, thy presence to be the power of the preaching, thy presence to be in amongst thy people today to receive, to give ears to hear to receive that, Lord, which thou hast ordained this day to feed thy people with. O Lord, may you be glorified. May thy name be lifted up. May you fill this place with yourself for thy name's sake. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

I think the first thing that really strikes me when I read the text that I have read to you this morning is how different that is today; how different it is, Paul's testimony and Paul's definition of his ministry and how different that is today in the voices that we hear in the religious world today. You hear in this passage today, you hear the Gospel humility; the humility of Christ himself in his servant. You hear the humbling, the trembling to even speak the word of God and how different that is today; how different it is the arrogance of man to stand up and say that he has a command of the Holy Spirit, that he has a command of Christ. And we have so many today that speak and call themselves ministers and that call themselves people and men of God that lack the very things that Paul exemplified because of Christ in him. And to go a step further, not even just the minister but if you listen to mainstream now and in this political year, we hear a lot of these candidates standing up and talking about what great Christians they are; what great men of God they are; how they're going to lead because they have a fear of God, but what's

missing? What's missing is what our text says today, the marks of a Christian; the marks of a minister of God; the work of the Gospel in his soul. What does it do? What things does it bring forth in one who will stand up and speak and say that, "I'm a Christian," and to stand up and speak and say, "Thus saith the Lord."

For the Apostle Paul, we begin in verse 3 today with a definition and I've tried to narrow down these three verses but there is something key in each one of them and may the Lord's blessing be upon them this morning. And in the very first text of verse 3, he says, "I was with you. I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling." Well, we're going to back up a minute just to see how this chapter started. He says, "And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom." Isn't that different than the voices you hear today that everyone says, "Look at me. Look how much wisdom I have. Look at my speech. Look what a great orator I am." This one that God came and called to preach his Gospel, to preach Jesus Christ, said, "My excellency is not in myself." There is a denial of self. That's what the Lord said, "You are to deny yourself. Take up your cross and follow me." And you will see in these words that Paul wrote this morning that the very ministry that the Lord gives to his servants is a cross. It's a great cross to bear.

There is fear in it as we saw in verse 3, but not to get ahead of ourselves, he said, "I did not come to you with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined." Do you see the determination? This is one who was raised and taught at the feet of Gamaliel. This was one who had the learning. This was one that said, "I was a Pharisee of the Pharisee. I was taught all of the high religion that was in the day." There as none higher and yet he says, "I am determined not to know anything among you saved Jesus Christ and him crucified." Paul when he was knocked off his horse, not literally was he knocked off it, but he was spiritually. He was brought down to the end of himself to see that the preaching of the cross is the preaching of the finished work of Christ where there is no creature involved in it and that's what you see in the power that's coming forth this morning. And as it comes and he says, "Listen, I've determined," that determination is because of grace. It's not because of anything in Paul. It's because of grace. It's the grace of Christ and what he transforms his ministers into being. They may used to have been that way, he may used to have gotten letters and gone from place to place persecuting the church and doing it in the name of God and doing it for accolades and doing it to say, "Look at Paul or Saul. Look who I am." But that wasn't the case anymore. The humility of Christ is upon his servant. The humility has brought Paul down to the end of himself and he looks in his life and he says, "You know, all of that stuff is dung to me. All of that worldly wisdom. All of that worldly knowledge." And what's left is the excellency of Christ. That's what's written upon his soul.

So as he's brought forth here, he says, "I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ and him crucified." Now, if you listen to that and you extrapolate that and you put it into today's religion and you say, "Wow," then what's going to come forth from you is what a great speak you are, what a great person you are, what great power you have but look at verse 3, "And I was with you," and look at these three things that he said marked his ministry, "I was with you in weakness. I was with you in fear. And I was

with you in much trembling." These things marked the Apostle Paul. That comes to our first question this morning as we look at this and we say, "Listen, is this just the minister of God?" No, because that's the effect the Gospel had on his minister to preach the truth. It humbled him. But guess what it does in the hearers? It's the same Gospel. The Lord works the same way. He comes and he speaks to his children and it humbles them and it empties them of self. And these three things which are so foreign to this world today are the three things that it produces and the first one, he says, "I was with you in much weakness."

Now, what kind of weakness is this because we know that Paul in his life was subjected to many things that caused him physical weakness. In Galatians 6:17, he said, "From henceforth let no man trouble me: for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus." That tells us that in his ministry and what he was called to do, he suffered many things like Christ did. Later in Corinthians he would say he was beaten with rods; he was stoned; he three times was shipwrecked. He was in many perils and in all of those things that Paul suffered physically did not compare to his suffering that he suffered spiritually. How do we know that? Because of Paul's own testimony at the end of 2 Corinthians when he tells us about that thorn that the Lord brought in his life and he said the Lord brought it there so that he would not be exalted above measure, and you see that struggle that's there. And, you see, when the Lord brought that and then when you compare that with what he went through in Romans 7, sometimes I read that chapter when the Lord brings me to it and I have great kinship with Paul there. When he gets to the part where he says, "That that I want to do, I can't do," I sit there and I say, "Amen, brother." I know. I know what my Lord did on the cross, I know he's worthy to be praised, I know this morning at this hour right now he's more worthy than anything in my life but I can't make myself come away in my thoughts. I can't keep my mind from wandering. I can't keep my mind upon the Lord. He must do it and that's what Paul said, "I can't. As much as I know and as much as I would like to do, I cannot perform it in myself." Do you not agonize with Paul in that? I agonize with him. When I hear him say those things, I say, "Yes, brother, I know what you're talking about. I know that struggle. I know that new nature that's in me that wants to praise the Lord but I know this old nature that I carry around with me doesn't and it wants to complain and it wants to look at life and it wants to complain about life."

But that thorn in the flesh. Let's turn over there real quick. I know I went, last time we were up here we went to 2 Corinthians but I want to touch on it one more time because I think it's needful here to look at chapter 12, verses 9 and 10 because we're talking about the child of God, the minister of God being made weak. Why is it so important? And I know, especially being a male, I know what pride is and I know male pride wants to stand up and go, "Oh, I'm not weak." We even raise our children, "Oh, you don't want to be weak. Get up. Don't show weakness. Don't do this. Don't show weakness." The child of God shows weakness. Do you know why? Because the Lord has made him that way. That's the Lord's work but our pride rises up so much that we can't show weakness. We don't want anybody to know that maybe we don't know as much as we want everybody to think that we do, but that's not what humbling grace is. That's not what the Gospel is to the soul of the child of God.

Look what it says in verse 9, he says, well, let's just back up to 7, "lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan." That's what God brought into Paul's life, a messenger of Satan to buffet him. Have you ever felt the messenger of Satan? Have you ever listened and given ear to the messenger of Satan because he comes mightily. He comes with such a persuasive tone and we like to give ear to him and it's that fleshly, carnal thing that Satan communicates with. And Paul said, "But he gave me this thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure." That's the weakness I'm talking to you about.

"For this thing I besought the Lord thrice. I kept praying, Lord, that it might depart from me." Many people want to make this out to be a physical thing but whether it's physical or not, it affected him in his soul and he kept crying out to the Lord for deliverance but the Lord didn't deliver him from this because the Lord's grace brought this to him to afflict him in this way to humble him because we can't humble ourselves. We can't put down and prostrate ourselves before God and that's what Paul is showing here.

"And he said unto me," and look at the red words because the words of Christ comes in this hour of need, in this hour and he says, "My grace," what I give to my sheep, "My grace is sufficient for thee." You don't have to keep praying for deliverance for this because my grace is enough to bring you through this trial every time I bring it into your life and this weakness that you have, I'm your strength.

"For my strength is made perfect in weakness." And Paul, you are going to be weak. You are going to be weak because I'm going to empty you. And when the Lord empties his people, they're weak because the creature has been put down so low that there's nothing for him to rely on anymore. He's been stripped from it.

"Most gladly," this now Paul's testimony, "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." That's the only way I cannot be weak anymore is in the strength of the power of Christ to lift me up, to minister to me, to put me on his beast, to take me back to pour his Spirit into me, to enliven me again.

"Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities." Nobody says that but the one emptied, the one that stands and says in weaknesses I came to you. Yes, in weaknesses you did because the Lord is your strength.

"I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong." Is that your testimony this morning? Are you only strong in the Lord? Because if you're not and you believe you have a physical strength, and you believe that you have the resolve, and you believe that you're something higher than what you are, and if you are God's child, he will empty you. He will strip you of that carnal dependency and, yes, it comes through an affliction. Whether it comes bodily which most of ours do, but the bodily afflictions work on the soul too. Believe me. Believe me because in that bodily affliction, you're going to do

everything you can to escape it. You're going to take every medication. You're going to go to the doctor. You're going to do whatever you can to escape a physical limitation and the Lord is going to show you that without him, none of that can be blessed.

That's how good he is to his people and that's what Paul said, "I was with you in weakness," but he was also with him, "in fear." And we're not talking about a carnal fear. We're not talking about, "Oh, I was so scared of everything when I preached the word." In fact, if you remember the time at Ephesus, remember when they begged Paul, "Don't go in there." Those people wanted to kill him and he said, "No, nothing's going to keep me back from speaking the truth," and they begged him and they beseeched him and said, "Paul, don't go in there." There was a zeal for Paul to preach the truth.

So what is this fear? What is this fear that in his ministry he was scared of? That he had a fear of? It was a godly, holy, reverent dread and do you know what that is? I experienced this dread. I experience it now and do you know what that is? You don't want to speak amiss when you're speaking the Gospel. You don't want to put a stumbling block in front of the sheep. You don't want to sit out there and you don't want to lift up yourself, you don't want anybody to sit there and look at you and go, "Oh, that's what Shawn says. That's what Paul says." No. That's where the fear of God is in the minister of his, he desires that his Lord is lifted up; his Lord is glorified. And that fear and that dread that's in Paul's heart and was in...he did not want himself to be lifted up. He desired so much for his Lord to be glorified.

In 2 Corinthians 7:5, he said, "For, when we were come into Macedonia, our flesh had no rest, but we were troubled on every side; without were fightings, within were fears." And Paul, like I said, many times and all those things that we already said that he went through shipwrecks and he went through all those things, and he went on that island and had all of those cannibals and all that stuff, that's a lot of stuff. You and I would listen and, "Oh, that's a lot of fearful things." And I'm not disputing that there wasn't fear there, but the fear that he's talking to them about right here is a fear of God. It's a dread fear and we're going to encounter it one more time today but you're going to have to wait because it's going to be later on at the end of this by another one of his servants.

So not only did the Gospel produce a weakness and a dependency upon his Lord, but it also produced this fear, a reverence that Paul knew that he saw in it the powerlessness of man both in himself to preach the message and in those that he preached to to receive it. That's a fear and a dread and a holy reverence of God saying, "Lord, I know without you intervening, there is nothing I'm going to say that's going to amount to anything." Now, let me tell you something: that's an easy trap to fall in as you stand up here like I am today and you say, "Well, I'm going to stand up there for 45 minutes, an hour," and be a tinkling cymbal because the Lord is not going to speak this word to his children. That's the kind of carnal unbelief the minister is subjected to. But he stands in the fear of the Lord knowing that it's the Lord who does it. It's the Lord's power to open the heart, to open the ears, to bring forth the power of the Spirit to witness Christ that way and that's a holy dread and it's a holy awesome fear.

But that's not all because with that he said, "in much trembling." But Paul, how can Paul be one who had much trembling who was taken up to the third heaven, who withstood Peter and spoke the truth to Peter? We have this boldness over and over that we saw. I even mentioned him saying, "No, I'm going to go and even though these people hate me, I'm going to go and preach." We see the boldness he was given on Mars Hill. But yet he trembled. Trembling. This is how Paul and the power of God said, "This is my ministry. I came to you this way in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling," and that trembling is under the sense of God's holiness and God's goodness and God's grace. It produces a holy fear and trembling in the minister of God, but not just the minister of God because if you ever witness the truth in this world, it is a trembling thing to witness the truth because so many haters, so many persecutors of the Lord, but this trembling is a mark of the Lord's presence in your soul.

But what are you trembling at? The work and all that the Lord has called you to speak and to do, your inability to perform it and you tremble knowing that, and I say this to my wife every time, I know that the Lord is faithful every time he brings me up here. I know it. He proves it every time, but in my carnal nature, I can't trust him. I can't. I can't get up here and say, "Okay, God's going to be with me again this week and everything's going to work out." It doesn't work that way. There is a trembling that takes place before every time because of that fear, that fear that I'm going to speak amiss and be left to say what Shawn says, how Shawn sees things which I know in my carnal nature does not see things according to Christ.

Isaiah 66:2 says, "For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the LORD: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word." That trembling at his word that Isaiah 2 had was because of the power of God in his soul to show you the magnificence, the holiness of the Lord and even to speak, "Thus saith the Lord," it's a trembling thing. It really is. I'm not making that up. To stand and say that, the Lord must work in your soul to show that holy awe that he is.

But that's not all because Paul said, "I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling," and then he comes in verse 4 and he tells us what his ministry is not and he tells us what it is. He gives us a negative and he gives us a positive and the first is the negative. He says, "And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom." What is man's wisdom? If you had to define man's wisdom, what is man's wisdom? And I read this and I wholeheartedly agree with it: all the wisdom which a man can actually acquire by his own exertion. Think about that. Man's wisdom is all the wisdom and knowledge that a man can actually acquire by his own exertion or the exertion of others to persuade others. So that means all of your learning going to school, that means all of your studying, everything that you can acquire by your strength, by your intellect, by your wisdom, is man's wisdom.

You say, "Well, that's not fair." I'm not making this stuff up. Paul called it man's wisdom. There is a man's wisdom. Man's wisdom is as high as man's intellect will go. It includes his skillful speech, all of his logical reasoning, all of the feelings that he likes to bring

forth to stir up passions of men and all of these things are learned, learned wisdoms, learned knowledge. We can all learn that way. We all have man's wisdom. Paul, as I mentioned earlier in this sermon, he sat at the feet of Gamaliel. He heard all of man's wisdom in religion but he says his ministry, what the Lord spoke to him in the power of Christ sitting on him, says that my speech and my preaching, what comes out of my mouth, my Gospel conversation and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's religion. All the earthly wisdom in this world cannot communicate heavenly faith. It can't bring forth heavenly faith which is a gift of God which we'll see.

He's not looking to persuade. That's the point. I am not a minister of God to reason with you logically. I don't care about that. I see the deceptiveness of that. I see Satan's hand in that. I don't want to theologially debate you based on what this guy says and what this guy says. That's man's wisdom. What the Lord has called me and given me is a demonstration of the Spirit and what is a demonstration? To prove so complete that there can remain not a shadow of doubt. When you speak man's wisdom, there will always be a shadow of doubt because as you're talking with men along man's wisdom's path, you're going to be conversing back and forth, give and taking basing on what you think and what they think. But there's a different power and there's a different wisdom that Proverbs speaks of and it's the wisdom of Christ and that wisdom, Paul says, he explains it this way, it comes in the demonstration of the Spirit and the power.

That's the only way it comes, with the power and the demonstration of the Spirit, the Holy Spirit. Isn't that what we're told in the word? He convinces his people. He leads his people to Christ. "I'm going to send you another Comforter. He's going to testify of me." That other Comforter was not a form of religion, a form of godliness. That other Comforter was a part, a person of the Holy Trinity. It was the Holy Spirit himself that leads the child of God to Christ. Not an earthly man. Not an earthly wisdom. Not man's wisdom.

I can't underscore that enough and that's why I said, as he stood in the power of the Lord to deliver his message, he knew in that reverent fear, he knew that everything he said, there would still be men out there that are sitting there and go, "No. I'm way smarter than you, Paul. Oh no, no, no, no. Do you know how much I've learned? Do you know what my name is? Do you know how much wealth I have? Do you know how smart I am? Do you know what I've done in my life?" And there were plenty of those. And Paul said, "You know, I stand as I preach the truth knowing in a holy reverent fear that that is a savor of death unto some but it's a savor of life to the people of God." That's what Christ is. That's what the preaching of Christ is and how foolish it is to make human wisdom our guide to eternal life. Human wisdom. Human wisdom and human intellect. May the Lord strip us of that today and all of that carnal reasoning that becomes our foundation of faith. I believe because of what I have done. Paul said, "I don't want to have anything to do with that. I know how deceptive that is." Why do you think Paul spent so much time saying how he had been emptied? How he had disowned all of those things that people could come and make an accusation to him about. "Oh well, you went through this and you did this and you did this." And Paul said, "That's all garbage. Don't look at it. Christ has made a difference. Christ has come in. All of that is nothing to me anymore." I hope

that's your testimony where there is a past where you did, a religious past and you said, "Oh, I tried to do this. I was good. I went to church. I built my life upon this and I did this and if I just do good." Hopefully the Lord has stripped you of all that and has shown you the power of grace where he has done all things.

1 Thessalonians 1:5 says, "For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake." This is the way it came in power and in the Holy Ghost. The Gospel did not come in word. Did you hear how he stressed that to them, the people there? It didn't come in word. Well, what do you mean? We hear words come out of our mouth. But they're not mine. They're in the power and the demonstration of the power of the Spirit and they're in the power of God to bring them forth. And I know, I know that there are so many people even right now at this hour who are standing before their people saying, "I have the power of God. I have the power of the Holy Ghost. I'm going to promote a revival here today and the Holy Spirit is going to be here. I'm going to pray down the Holy Spirit." That's not what you hear in this one called of God. "I came in weakness. I came in fear. And I came in much trembling." And if that doesn't sound like somebody dependent upon a higher power, I don't know what does. Dependency. Dependency.

1 Corinthians 4:20 says, "For the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power." Power. You keep hearing that term being used today. Power. Paul used it a lot. It's got to come with power. That's a power greater than his. Paul was, I mean, we read the words of Paul and we can say, "Well, you persuaded me." And Agrippa said that, "Well, you've almost persuaded me with those words." So we know he had some kind of persuasive speech but he said, "knowing the terror of the Lord, I persuade men." What? "I have a fear of God. I know that the Lord is sovereign over the salvation or the damnation of that one that he's going to bring me in contact with." And that's where he brought the apostle to sit at his feet that way. May the Lord bring us to sit at his feet.

Then we move on to verse 5, "That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God." Now the first thing we see that we're hit right in the face with here is that there is a faith that stands in the wisdom of men and I think we all know what that faith is, it's that carnal faith; it's that man-centered faith; it's that faith that has a mixture of grace and the law; it's that faith that has a mixture of the creature and Christ; it's that faith that says, "I'll do my part, Lord, you do yours." We're going to encounter that here in a minute. There is a faith that stands in the wisdom of men, but Paul said, "I don't have anything to do with that." Your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men but look how he ends it again, "in the power of God." God's power to gift that faith. God's power to bring forth that faith. "I live by the faith of the Son of God," Paul said. "I don't live by my faith. If I did, it would be this faith that stands in the wisdom of men." But the faith that stands in the power of God is real. It's real because it's a power that comes upon the child of God and he is so humble he knows that some other hand is in there. It's not himself. He can't will himself to it. He can't make himself that. He can't strengthen himself in the faith. He can't draw it forth out of himself. And we're constantly told that and I'm going to share something with you here in a minute that we looked at this week in the children's

class, it makes the hair stand up on the back of my neck because of how man persuades man what man can do.

We won't wait any longer. Let's go now. Let's go over to Job 22. This is the third time that Eliphaz, one of these friends that I've mentioned to many times. One of these friends now is going to speak to Job trying, and they haven't been able to sway Job off of his stance that the Lord is with him. They keep telling him that the Lord is destroying him; they gave him a remedy to heal himself as you all heard from me probably about a month ago when we looked at all three of the friends and their carnal understanding. Now, I want you to bear with me as I read 21 through 30. After all that he had, after all the wickedness that he pointed out to Job, after he said, "God is destroying you," this is his remedy. This is the wisdom of men. Verse 21 begins, "Acquaint," this is his words to Job, "Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace." The power is in you, Job. You acquaint yourself with the Lord and be at peace. That's how you do it. You go call on God and you'll have peace.

"Thereby good shall come unto thee." This is what we term easy believism. Do you know what, Job? Your problem is you're too involved in yourself. What you need to do is to acquaint yourself with him and then you can be at peace. But it gets worse.

"Receive, I pray thee, the law from his mouth." If you just keep his law, then you won't have any problems with him.

"Receive, I pray thee, the law from his mouth and lay up his words in thine heart." Keep what he says to you in your heart so when you get into these situations, that you'll have the power to bring it out of yourself and to combat this. And you say, "Well, you know, this isn't bad counsel." It gets better.

"If thou return to the Almighty," if thou, if you, Job, return to the Almighty, "thou shalt be built up, thou shalt put away iniquity." It's in your power, Job. This is the wisdom of men. Just put your sin away, put your iniquity away, "far from thy tabernacles." If you return to the Almighty, you're wayward, you're a sheep, you're wandering, but if you come back, if you will worship, if you will it to be, Job, it will be that way. Just will yourself to put your sin away, then, oh, well, what promise do you get?

"Then shalt thou lay up gold as dust." You're going to get to have all those physical things that you lost. Isn't that what you're mourning over, the loss of all of your property and loss of all of your wealth?

"Then you'll lay up gold as dust and the gold of Ophir as the stones of the brooks. Yea, the Almighty shall be thy defence, and thou shalt have plenty of silver." This is the religious man telling him that, "Your path to happiness is in carnal things and, Job, that's the reason you're not happy it's because you've lost your carnal things and all you have to do is put your sin away, confess your sins, draw close to the Almighty one and then he's going to give you all those carnal things again." It almost sounds like what Mohammed

preaches to his people. That which is the problem with all of false religion, it's all man centered. It all stands in the wisdom of man. So let's go on.

"For then shalt thou have thy delight in the Almighty," then you can, "and shalt lift up thy face unto God." Now that you've done your part, now that you've done what is your penance, now that you've done your obedience to the law, now that you've kept the way, now you can lift your face unto God because, Job, you're sitting there in ashes and you're sitting there very humbled and look at us, look at all three of us. Now, we've got our riches, we've got our health, we've got everything so we must be doing something right.

"Thou shalt make thy prayer unto him, and he shall hear thee, and thou shalt pay thy vows. Thou shalt also decree a thing, and it shall be established unto thee: and the light shall shine upon thy ways." Do you see the creature centeredness here? Do you see how man has his power to approach God? How many has his will to will himself to these things according to today's religion? This is why we can have politicians stand up and tell us that they're Christians. This is why they can stand up and do that and do everything underhanded under the sun because all they've got to do is will themselves and heal themselves. That's how wicked today's religion is and that's how wicked it is to mix it with grace. That's how wicked it is that this old nature in us wants to rise up and do these very things if it were possible.

"For then shalt thou have thy delight in the Almighty, and shalt lift up thy face unto God. Thou shalt make thy prayer unto him, and he shall hear thee, and thou shalt pay thy vows. Thou shalt also decree a thing." Now the power comes to the creature. You decree a thing. You tell God what you want.

You come to the throne that way, "and it shall be established unto thee: and the light shall shine upon thy ways. When men are cast down, then thou shalt say." You'll be such a testimony to them, Job, you'll say there is lifting up and he shall save the humble person. You'll be able to minister to the next guy this happens to. You'll be able to lift them out of the ground and tell them what great power you have. Wow.

"He shall deliver the island of the innocent: and it is delivered by the pureness of thine hands." Wow. And I'm telling you, remember how we said that at the beginning, how the weakness came a lot more from what was in the spiritual realm than the physical? I guarantee you as the Spirit witnesses to my spirit, the things that Job went through with these three friends and the power that they had to keep coming as Satan comes in waves of do this and live, do this and live, do this and live, had to weigh so much on Job. It had to be far worse than all of those things that he lost, all those physical things that we can't even fathom losing all of those things. But on top of all that, he's being constantly bombed with, "This is how you get to God. You have the power to heal yourself. Get up and do it."

But now, 23 is how the Lord kept Job and Job had a few things to say and in verse 6 he says, "Will he plead against me with his great power?" He's speaking of the Lord. "No; but he would put strength in me." He has emptied me and now the only way I'm going

forward is his strength. Now let's pick this up in 10, "But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold." The power is all in God, he said. He knoweth the way that I take. It's his path he has ordained for me. He has afflicted me this way in my soul to bring me to the end of myself and you don't think that's true? Listen to this testimony. Listen to the power of the Holy Ghost that worked in Job even at this time that he's so downtrodden by the religious world.

"But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold." That's an assurance in his Lord. "My foot has held his steps." His steps went first. My shepherd goes before me. "His way have I kept." It's not me, Job said. This is all of him and if you don't believe that, it's coming. "And not declined. Neither have I gone back from the commandment of his lips." Do you see that? He keeps putting the crown back on its rightful head. This is what my Lord has done. It's his voice speaking to me. It's his power for me to walk. It's his power that I stand before you today and I'm still not destroyed. It's because the Lord keeps me.

"Neither have I gone back from the commandment of his lips: I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food." All of those physical things that you promised me are nothing compared to what comes forth out of his mouth, the glory of Christ resting upon me.

"But he is in one mind, and who can turn him?" This is the sovereignty of God. "And what his soul desireth, even that he doeth." He does all according to the counsel of his will and none of you three friends can stay his hand and none of you can make...remember what they kept saying that all the power was in the creature? What is Job saying? "All of the power is in my sovereign God," and if you don't believe that, just read the next verse.

"For he performeth the thing that is appointed for me." That is the mark of the child of God being emptied. That is the mark of being tried in the fire. That's the faith of the Son of God to rise up and say, "Lord, you performed it. You have performed the thing that is appointed for me: and many such things are with him." It's all of him and that's the testimony of the Lord's child.

But I told you earlier there was another one that experienced the fear of the Lord. Look how this chapter ends. "Therefore am I troubled at his presence." Did you see that? The power to say that about his Lord and then, "But I'm troubled. I'm troubled." This is a fear of God, a holy, reverent fear. "I am troubles at his presence: when I consider, I am afraid of him." I'm afraid because my Lord holds everything. But this is a holy fear. He's not quaking in his boots. It's a holy, reverent fear.

"For God maketh my heart soft, and the Almighty troubleth me." Did you see that? The Lord makes my heart soft and he troubles me. He brings the grief. He heals me. All of this is for Romans 8:28, my good to them who are called according to his purpose. Him. His purpose.

"Because I was not cut off before the darkness." I wasn't cut off. He didn't destroy me and the darkness of my soul came when all of this, the Lord's design and it's to strip me and to show me this darkness.

"Neither hath he covered the darkness from my face." He's revealing the depth of the sin. That's the goodness of the Lord to lead us to repentance and that's what you're going to see; that's what we all know if we've read the book of Job. That's how it is. The Lord brings him to the end of himself to put his hand upon his mouth and say, "Lord, I can't speak. I'm too unworthy to speak." And the Lord pronounces him righteous in him and there is no other way.

2 Thessalonians 1:11 says, "Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power." Remember, this is under our heading, "But in the power of God." That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men but in the power of God. Peter said it this way in 1 Peter 1:5, "Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." O Lord, reveal it in the last time. Reveal it again that you, Lord, your faith is the only way I as your child can live in this world. Strip me of my creature dependency. Show me, Lord, that I stand in need of thy power each day.

As I read this text one more time, I pray that it is my testimony. I pray that it is the testimony that the Lord has worked in my soul and the souls of you in this room. "And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God."

I have to ask: why? Why would we ever want to rob the Lord of his glory as Eliphaz did? Why? I know the answer because I know the prince of the power of the air and I know that's his design in the religious world today is to rob the Lord of glory of all his glory. May the Lord show us today where the crown belongs and may he keep us there to witness his power.

Dear heavenly Father, most gracious Lord, would you add thy power, thy wisdom, thy clarity to thy word this day for the glory of thee. In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.