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## SERMONIC.

### GOD'S IDEA OF MAN.

BY DAVID J. HILL, LL.D. [BAPTIST],  
PRESIDENT OF THE UNIVERSITY  
AT LEWISBURG, PA.

*What is man, that thou art mindful of him?*  
—Ps. viii: 4.

Considered as a part of nature, man is insignificant. Without our modern knowledge of astronomy, by which the ancient conception of the universe is immeasurably expanded, the royal Psalmist, looking from his native Judean hills, as he watched his sheep through the stillness of the Oriental night, beneath the lustrous canopy which spread above him, was forced to exclaim, in his communing with Jehovah: "When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; what is man, that thou art mindful of him?" Seen from some lofty height, as an object in an expanded landscape, man is but a speck in the wide field of vision. Compared even with his fellow-creatures of the animal kingdom, denizens of the jungle or the sea, he is but a weak and diminutive being. Lifted by the strong hand of the storm, or tossed by the waves of the ocean, he is like a feather on the tornado's breath,

or a leaf upon the rushing waters. Even the silent, invisible forces move him at their will, the sun's light extinguishing his vision, a change of temperature chilling his heart, the electric current blotting out all consciousness, and the unseen fever wasting him away as by the cursing touch of a magician.

As a product of nature man seems to possess a higher dignity. He is the last result of the vast systems of forces that play about him. Summing up in his composite being all the kingdoms of nature, the inorganic, the vegetable and the animal, as man does, the Psalmist could truly say, "Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hand; Thou hast put all things under his feet." Apart from man, apart from the consciousness and reason, that are his attributes, the glory of the visible universe has little meaning. What is the beauty of the earth, vast and wonderful though it be, with its oceans and mountains, its wealth of treasures, and its fertile plains, its forest solitudes, and its animated waters, without its rational inhabitants? What is the grandeur of the heavens, with their infinite space and innumerable orbs, their immeasurable energies

[Many of the full sermons and condensations published in this MONTHLY are printed from the authors' manuscripts; others are specially reported for this publication. Great care is taken to make these reports correct. The condensations are carefully made under our editorial supervision. All the sermons of the "International Sunday-School Service" are written expressly for THE HOMILETIC MONTHLY.—ED.]

through a fiery furnace, God will keep us from all harm.

A true Christian shrinks from unnecessary exposure to evil and moral danger. Then in his hour of need he can trust God to deliver him. The dove is a clean bird. Its instincts are clean. It hates defilement. It keeps its plumage anointed with an "unction" that preserves it from impurity. It loves, and lives for, cleanness. God is able to anoint us with an unction of the Holy One, so as to preserve us in holiness before Him. Many fail because their faith does not grasp His Almighty grace. We lack faith because our consecration is not entire, nor our obedience unqualified. External rules and aids will do little for us until we are made right within. You cannot make a ship sail steadily by external supports, but you must put the ballast inside. God has provided grace to ballast our souls for a safe voyage. He is able to keep what we have committed to Him. Life may be rugged, trials sharp, difficulties manifold, burdens heavy, and circumstances unfriendly; but, united to Christ, we may be more than conquerors. "Though ye have lien among the pots, yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold."

#### THE GOSPEL THE POWER OF GOD.

By B. M. PALMER, D.D. [PRESBYTERIAN],  
IN NEW ORLEANS, LA.

*I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.—Rom. i: 16.*

VIEWED in any and every aspect, Christianity is immeasurably superior to every other system of religious truth. As a speculative scheme it excels human philosophy both in the range and in the methods of its teachings. It tells of God, His nature and perfections, His creative power and providential care. It tells of man, his faculties and destiny; of eternity and its issues. Its aim is higher than the inculcation either of science or philosophy, while its scope includes both. No discovery in

the one, nor sound principle in the other, but serves to strengthen its evidences or to illustrate its mysteries. It overpasses both in the disclosure of truths upon which earthly oracles are dumb. It teaches, not by virtue of human discovery, but upon the authority of an inspired testimony, by which conjecture is reduced to knowledge, and opinion is converted into faith.

In the sphere of morals it transcends all human ethics—not only that it places man in wider relations, sets forth duty with greater precision, and supplies principles of action which are higher—but pre-eminently in the fact that it presents a more perfect and unvarying standard of obligation in the divine law, emancipating us from the shifting canons of utility and expediency, or from the still more capricious sense of fitness and propriety. We are no longer subject to the whims of fancy or of taste, but have a definite law for the measurement both of character and of conduct.

The full power of Christianity, however, is not felt until we accept it as a Gospel; until we rise into the sphere of religion and consider it as the kind of religion which is suited to the case of a sinner. This precisely is what the text affirms: that "the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." When we wish to be most deeply impressed with a sense of God's power, we are apt to select our illustrations from the visible and material universe—perhaps for the reason that the movement of physical force gives us the first conception of what we call power; which, once obtained, is readily transferred from the sphere of the natural to that of the spiritual and moral. But Paul finds the highest evidences of divine power, not in the kingdom of nature, but of grace. True, he proves the heathen to be without excuse, since "His eternal power and Godhead are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made." (Rom. i: 20.) But, for one reference to the works of creation he makes a dozen to the scheme of grace, when he would

impress us with the vast resources of Jehovah's wisdom and power. Hear him in the text, "For I am not ashamed"—which is but a suggestive way of describing the triumphant joy with which he contemplates "the Gospel of Christ" as being "the power of God unto salvation." He brings out the thought on this, its positive side, in Galatians: "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." (Gal. vi: 14.) He writes to the Corinthians: "The preaching of the cross is to them that perish, foolishness; but unto us which are saved, it is the power of God. \* \* \* But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but to them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ, the power of God, and the wisdom of God." (1 Cor. i: 18, 23, 24.) In his epistle to the Ephesians, he prays that they might know "what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe; according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places." (Eph. i: 19, 20.) These are but instances of the frequency and unction with which Paul sets forth the Gospel as exhibiting the fullness of divine power, which is the topic to which I will restrict your thoughts this morning.

Two difficulties obviously oppose the salvation of a sinner. The first is external, arising from his relations to the divine law as one condemned under the penalty; the second is internal, arising from his actual character unfitting him for fellowship with his Maker. In other words, the guilt and the disability of sin must both be removed—the one in the complete justification of the believer, the other in his perfect sanctification.

#### I. THE PROOF OF POWER IN THE REMOVAL OF HUMAN GUILT.

1. *Power is displayed in constituting the substitute who shall take the sinner's place*

*under the law.* No creature was equal to the task of vindicating the law and atoning for sin. A divine sacrifice was necessary; and how shall the divine suffer and die? The conjunction of infinite extremes in the one person of the Mediator should impress us with the power that accomplishes it: and yet we have not touched the core of the mystery. The incarnation of Deity in "the seed of the woman," supernaturally conceived in the womb of a virgin, is the greatest wonder and miracle of the universe.

2. *Power is displayed in sustaining Christ's human nature under the pressure of the penalty.*

3. *There was a vast exhibition of power in exalting Him, through the resurrection, to universal Mediatorial authority and rule.* Says the apostle: "According to the working of his mighty power which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come." (Eph. i: 19-21.) Think, too, of the change wrought in what is purely human in Christ Jesus when, in company with the divine, it is "seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high" (Heb. iii: Acts ii: 33, and v: 31), and is there exalted to universal priesthood and royal supremacy. It is not for me to expand, much less to explain, the thought. The suggestion of it suffices to fill the soul with adoring wonder. How is it that God's power confederates the human nature in Christ, with the divine in a state of exaltation and glory; how "this man," Christ Jesus, shall have capacity to "judge the world in righteousness, whereof we have assurance in that God hath raised him from the dead" (Acts xvii: 31); how the human in Him shall be glorified into power to wield that providence which is committed to His hands (Matt. xxviii: 18). Nay, more: when the kingdom shall be delivered to the Father, that God may be all in all (1 Cor. xv: 24),

how He shall remain in His complex person, the God-man, eternally the head of His redeemed people, and the fountain of their blessedness and joy. Under all these forms we behold the power of God exhibited in co-ordinating the finite factor in our Lord's person with the infinite and eternal, so necessary to the fulfilment of His functions as the Priest and King of His Church. In revealing the righteousness by which the sinner is justified forever, the Gospel is truly "the power of God to salvation."

II. We consider next **THE EVIDENCE OF POWER IN THE SUBJECTIVE CHANGE WROUGHT WITHIN THE SINNER HIMSELF.**

1. And right upon the threshold is the power displayed in regeneration, when we are made new creatures in Christ Jesus. The highest prerogative is that of bestowing life—it is creation, in the fullest conception of the term.

2. There is power in preserving the Christian amid the temptations and under the discipline of this unfriendly world.

3. But the climax of this power is reached in the believer's final translation to heaven, where he is made perfect in holiness and bliss forever. It may seem incredible to us in the hour of severe temptation when, for the moment, we go down under the fierce assault; or in the hour of our penitence, when we weep tears of shame over the sin which has clouded God's face with a frown of displeasure. It seems impossible then that the last stain will be purged from the conscience, and the last wrinkle be taken out of the character, and that we shall be presented without blemish before the throne of the Father. What a wonderful transformation, when we shall be made meet to lie in the divine bosom and to drink eternal draughts of divine joy! Yet this is the destiny which awaits every child of grace, however obscure may be his experience now. The nature will be holy; the habit of holiness will be perfectly formed; the acts of holiness will be easy; the exemption from temptation and fear will be complete; the delights of holiness will rush in upon the soul

through every spiritual sense; and the saint's capacity for joy will be filled to the brim. "Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!" And well may we, with Paul, glory in that Gospel which is thus "the power of God unto salvation"—that salvation which is threefold in its form: a salvation from the guilt of sin, a salvation from the dominion of sin, a salvation from the presence and being of sin.

### THE PROPORTION OF FAITH.

By R. S. STORRS, D.D. [CONGREGATIONAL], IN CHURCH OF THE PILGRIMS, BROOKLYN.

*Let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith.*—Rom. xii: 6.

THE Greek word rendered "prophet" in this passage means one who speaks for another, who conveys a message, and is the expounder and interpreter of another's thought. In the Hebrew word there is involved the idea of a fountain bubbling up as from between rocks, subjected to pressure from without. The prophet had often the function of declaring future events; but we must not always limit the word "prophet" by the predictive element in it. It is more inclusive. Abraham, Moses, Samuel, Nathan, and Isaiah were prophets—Miriam and Deborah as well. There were schools of prophets. They brought messages to men pertaining to the present practical duty of life. So in the New Testament, Barnabas, Paul, the daughters of Philip and many others declared the message of God, and were inspired by His Spirit. He who now does this, stands in the line of all before him, has the same aid and the promise of the same attending efficacy.

"According to the faith." We make the sense clearer by inserting the article, or, as the Revised Version reads, "our faith;" that is, the objective system of truth, the Gospel which makes us wise unto salvation. It is a vast, vital, co-ordinated system, built up a unity, like the root, the stem and branch, or the wall, the tower and spire of a building. The balance of every part with