

## The Power of God and the Will of God

(Matthew 4:1-11)

### INTRODUCTION:

1. Have you ever heard someone say something like, “Well, I know the Bible says that, but I just believe God has the power to do \_\_\_\_\_.”
2. When someone says that, they are failing to make the biblical distinction between **the power of God** and **the will of God**.
  - A. In other words, they are failing to see that though God may have the power to do something does not mean that it is His will to do so.
  - B. Because this distinction is made abundantly clear in the Bible, understanding and appreciating this distinction is important because:
    - i. It is part of being faithful to God to help the world know the truth and to be drawn closer to Jesus and salvation.
    - ii. Failure to understand and appreciate this distinction can cause one to take a position that stands in direct contradiction to God’s word.
3. So, today I want to look at how God’s power to do something and His will to do it are not the same. To do this I want to...
  - A. Consider Jesus’ interaction with the devil when being tempted in the wilderness (Matt. 4:1-11).
  - B. Present some biblical examples of this distinction.
  - C. Make application of this truth to some important issues concerning salvation.

### BODY:

#### **I. Jesus being tempted by the devil in the wilderness (Matt. 4:1-11):**

- A. Jesus is tempted concerning hunger (Matt. 4:1-4 – “Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. <sup>2</sup> And after He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He then became hungry. <sup>3</sup> And the tempter came and said to Him, “If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.” <sup>4</sup> But He answered and said, “It is written, ‘Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.’”).
  1. Though the devil mentioned Jesus’ hunger, he was attacking Jesus’ relationship with the Father stated in Matt. 3:17: “This is my My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased.”
  2. For, the devil begins with “If you are the **Son** of God...” which was intended to imply...
    - a. Then why are you hungry? Would a father pleased with His son not feed Him?
    - b. Surely your father would not fault you then for using your power to provide bread to satisfy your hunger? (Jesus could create bread – feeding 5/4000 - Matt. 14 & 15).
  3. The devil’s request, which was not wrong in itself to do, was refused, however, because Jesus knew His **hunger was the Father’s will** because it had divine purpose (4:4).
    - a. He showed this by referencing God’s dealing with Israel (Deut. 8:3 – “He **humbled you** and **let you be hungry**, and fed you with manna which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that **He might make you understand** that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the LORD.”).
      - b. Jesus did not do what He had the power to do because it was not God’s will that He do it.
- B. The temptation concerning God’s care (Matt. 4:5-7 – “Then the devil took Him into the holy city and had Him stand on the pinnacle of the temple, <sup>6</sup> and said to Him, “If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down; for it is written, ‘He will command His angels concerning You’; and ‘On their hands they will bear you up, so that You will not strike Your foot against a stone.’” <sup>7</sup> Jesus said to him, “On the other hand, it is written, ‘You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.’”).
  1. This temptation was also intended to bring doubt on Jesus’ relationship with the Father.
    - a. For, as the Son of God, Jesus should have absolute faith in the God’s power to protect those who trust Him (quoted from Psalm 91:11-12).
    - b. So, all it would take to show he had no doubts would be to jump—to put God’s words to the test and prove His faith in them.
  2. Jesus refused, however, reminding Satan that it was also **God’s will** that His promises and power not be put to the test by His people (Deut. 6:16).

3. So, though without question Jesus trusted the Father's power to protect Him, He again showed that to be faithful one must defer to God's will on any matter.
- C. The temptation concerning Jesus' kingdom/rule (Matt. 4:8-11 – "Again, the devil took Him to a very high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory; <sup>9</sup> and he said to Him, "All these things I will give You, if You fall down and worship me." <sup>10</sup> Then Jesus said to him, "Go, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and serve Him only.'" <sup>11</sup> Then the devil left Him; and behold, angels came and began to minister to Him."").
  1. The devil's temptation again focused on Jesus' relationship with the Father.
    - a. It targeted Jesus' goal for coming—the establishment of His rule/dominion over the world (Dan. 7:14) which the Father desired to be achieved **only through suffering**.
    - b. For, he presented an "easier" route to that goal—one **without suffering**, implying that if the Father really loved Jesus, **He has the power to do this another way!**
  2. Jesus, however, rejected this temptation, pointing out that God's will must be done—that only God is to be worshipped and served/obeyed—**even if suffering is the result** (4:10)!
  3. So again, we see that though God may have the power to do something, that is not the same as it being His will that it be done.
- D. Thus, Jesus' words and actions clearly show the importance of differentiating between God's power to do something, and His will to do it.

## II. Examples of this distinction:

- A. Israel and the bronze serpent (Numbers 21):
  - 1. Israel spoke against God and Moses in the wilderness (21:5 – "The people spoke against God and Moses, "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we loathe this miserable food."").
  2. So, God punished them for their lack of faith by sending "fiery serpents among the people and they bit the people, so that many people of Israel died" (21:6).
  - 3. Finally, based on the people's repentance, God provided a means by which His power could save those who were bitten (21:7-9 – "So the people came to Moses and said, "We have sinned, because we have spoken against the LORD and you; intercede with the LORD, that He may **remove the serpents from us**." And Moses interceded for the people. <sup>8</sup> Then the LORD said to Moses, "**Make a fiery serpent, and set it on a standard**; and it shall come about, that everyone who is bitten, **when he looks at it, he will live**." <sup>9</sup> And Moses made a bronze serpent and set it on the standard; and it came about, that if a serpent bit any man, when he looked to the bronze serpent, he lived."").
    - a. Though the Jews asked, and **God definitely had the power** to do so, He did not take the snakes away or render them harmless!
    - b. For, we learn instead that **His will** was to apply His power to save those bitten through their having faith enough to **look at the bronze serpent** made by Moses.
- B. Naaman (2 Kings 5):
  1. Naaman was a leper in Syria, a man of renown in the King's army, who was informed by his Jewish slave girl of God's power to heal him through the prophet Elisha who lived in Israel.
  - 2. Naaman showed faith by coming to Israel and making his way to Elisha's house, resulting in the opportunity to be healed (5:10 – "Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, "Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh will be restored to you and you will be clean."").
    - a. Within Elisha's response was:
      - i. The **power of God** to heal: "your flesh will be restored to you and you will be clean."
      - ii. The **will of God** for receiving it: "Go and wash in the Jordan seven times."
    - b. Naaman, however, committed the fatal error of so many, believing there to be no difference in God's power and His will (5:11-12 – "But Naaman was furious and went away and said, "Behold, **I thought**, 'He will surely come out to me and stand and call on the name of the LORD his God, and wave his hand over the place and cure the leper.' <sup>12</sup> Are not Abanah and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them and be clean?") So he turned and went away in a rage."").

- i. Did God have the power to heal him in these ways? Yes, of course!
  - ii. But, as Elisha had expressed, God's will must also play a part in his healing.
- 3. So, by the encouragement of his servants, Naaman learned that only by **obeying God's will** was **God's power to be applied** to heal him (5:13-14 – "Then his servants came near and spoke to him and said, "My father, had the prophet told you to do some great thing, would you not have done it? How much more then, when he says to you, 'Wash, and be clean'?"<sup>14</sup> So he went down and dipped himself seven times in the Jordan, according to the word of the man of God; and his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child and he was clean.").
- 4. Again, just because God has the power to act does not mean it is his will to do so.

### • III. Application:

- A. Can God's power save everyone?
  - 1. Yes! God has the power and desire to save everyone.
    - a. His power to save everyone is shown this through Jesus (Rom. 5:18-19 – "So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so **through one act of righteousness** there **resulted justification of life to all men.**"<sup>19</sup> For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so **through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous.**").
    - b. He desires all to be saved (1 Tim. 2:3-4 – "This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior,<sup>4</sup> who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.").
  - 2. Yet not all are saved (Matt. 7:13-14 – "Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it."<sup>14</sup> For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it.").
  - 3. How can this be?
    - a. For, it is God's will to save those who **put their faith in Jesus Christ** (Rom. 1:16-17 – "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek."<sup>17</sup> For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "But the righteous man shall live by faith.").
    - b. Yet, many, will not believe (Acts 28:23-24 – "When they had set a day for Paul, they came to him at his lodging in large numbers; and he was explaining to them by solemnly testifying about **the kingdom of God** and **trying to persuade them concerning Jesus**, from both the Law of Moses and from the Prophets, from morning until evening."<sup>24</sup> Some were being persuaded by the things spoken, **but others would not believe.**").
  - 4. Though God has the power to save all people, it is his will that salvation be by faith.
- B. Will God save people by "faith only"?
  - 1. As far as God's power and desire go, we know that...
    - a. God's **power** through Jesus has made it possible to be saved by faith (John 3:16 – "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.").
    - b. We must have faith (Heb. 11:6 – "And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.").
  - 2. Yet, we also know that it is God's will that faith that saved must include **obedience**.
    - a. Jesus saves those who obey Him (Heb. 5:8-9 – "Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered."<sup>9</sup> And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation").
    - b. Faith alone—without works of obedience—is dead (Jas. 2:14-17, 24, 26 – "What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but he has no works? Can that faith save him?<sup>15</sup> If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food,<sup>16</sup> and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and be filled," and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that?<sup>17</sup> Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead,

being by itself...<sup>24</sup> You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone...<sup>26</sup> For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.”).

- c. So, when people say God saves by faith alone, they are failing to distinguish between God’s power to save and His will for how one is saved, which causes them, sadly, to stand in opposition to God’s will and to teach salvation by dead faith.
- C. Will God save people today without baptism?
  - 1. God has the power to save people however He chooses.
    - a. Salvation of condemned sinners is the results of His plan in accordance with His grace.
    - b. So, without question the conditions of that salvation are His to determine and enforce.
  2. Yet, God’s will on the conditions of baptism in His plan to save sinners is clear.
    - a. God’s **will** is that the gospel include the necessity of baptism for salvation (Mark 16:15-16 – “And He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.”<sup>16</sup> He who has believed **and has been baptized shall be saved**; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned.”)
    - b. Christians preached the necessity of baptism.
      - i. The apostles at Pentecost (Acts 2:36-38, 40 – “Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ—this Jesus whom you crucified.”<sup>37</sup> Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brethren, what shall we do?”<sup>38</sup> Peter said to them, “**Repent**, and each of you **be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins**; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>39</sup> For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself...<sup>41</sup> So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls.”).
      - ii. Ananias to Saul (Acts 22:16 – “Now why do you delay? Get up and **be baptized, and wash away your sins**, calling on His name.”).
      - iii. Peter, etc., reminded Christians of baptism’s necessity (1 Pet. 3:21 – “Corresponding to that, **baptism now saves you**—not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an **appeal to God for a good conscience**—through the resurrection of Jesus Christ”).

#### CONCLUSION:

1. So, I hope you see that there is a significant difference, a definite distinction, to be made in the power of God to act and the will of God to act and the importance of recognizing this.
2. So, if you are hoping for God’s power to be applied in a certain way in your life, then it is imperative that you look to God’s word first to see if it is His will that He apply His power in that way.
3. It is God’s will that His power to save you from your sins...
  - A. Begins with faith in Jesus, repentance of sin, confession of your faith, and then the application of his power to forgive your sins through baptism into Christ (Acts 2:38; Rom. 6:3-4).
  - B. Can also be applied to those who may have left the faith behind, been unfaithful to God, and are now in need of restoration to Christ and His saving grace through confession and repentance of sin and a plea in prayer for God’s forgiveness (Acts 8, etc.)
4. If you need salvation today, please come!