

“Omicron Is Not Omnipotent, However God is”

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Sermon for 16 January 2022

Texts: Galatians 3:7-14 & Heb. 11:1-16

Fear hawkers and merchants of dread would have us despair of our faith. They do not believe that God can save us, or, if He even exists, that He has any inclination to do so. Some affirm this because, themselves excepted, they believe that humanity is worthless. Or that we are helpless before climate change, or COVID! And we are hopelessly violent and criminally racist. Entirely overwhelmed!

So I stand today to declare fear and dread won't win! Sin, unbelief, darkness and death don't win . . . *because* Omicron is not omnipotent, and God is!

The end of this world is a planned event—and the contours of the end have been revealed to us. For those who believe, it ends in victory. That victory is attended by the defeat of unbelief—and, yes, of Satan, darkness and the whole demonic kingdom(!)—coupled with the Second Coming of Christ, the kingdom of God on earth and the initiation of everlasting life. I know this, you know this, by the revelation of the Spirit in the Word, we know how it ends just as, from the same sources, we know how it began.

You are aware, I trust, that passing through the portal of death, whether by Omicron, the Delta Variant, from co-morbidity, aging or other natural causes is what, before Christ returns, the majority of humanity will face. The day and the cause both determined by God, again as a mercy, to free us from an eternity in this fallen world! This we say, so that all who believe may be prepared to meet their Maker and dial back their dread and anxiety with calmness, if not serenity. It is to be expected for all who die before the Lord's Return. Some have contracted and died of COVID; but that in no way accounts for all the mortality in the world! So there are two reasons why our panic should subside: 1. you will not die of COVID unless that is God's plan for you; and 2. you will not die prematurely regardless of your cause of death.

If this seems right to you, I must share why this is ground zero for what I have to share: Omicron Is Not Omnipotent, However God is. Mortality is a reminder of our limitations. Our limitations have an impact on free will; indeed they are on a collision course with each other. The ability to choose between good or evil is ours, but only in a limited degree. Only God has that ability absolutely and exercises it perfectly. It follows from this that the doctrine of free will and the doctrine of destitution counter each other. The debilitating power of sin, infecting our entire human nature, affects our free will; meaning *we could not keep the law perfectly even if we voluntarily chose to!* It is an error to suggest that the free will, of all the aptitudes and abilities, is somehow exempt from the corruption of sin! And the same goes for reason. We are not able to will, or think purely, let alone perfectly *and that is why we cannot self-save, or perfect ourselves through free will, or reason.* We are saved by grace through faith alone. First, sin must be dealt with, cancelled, or abolished and that is the liberating thing that Christ came and accomplished. The forgiven have free will, and free thinking; let the redeemed of the Lord say so. “Did we in our own strength confide, our striving would be losing; Were not the right Man on our side, the Man of God's own choosing”—that would be Jesus, the Christ. (Luther's “A Mighty Fortress”)

The doomsaying dooms-day-ers have left out this one, most essential calculation out of their dismal projections of death by drowning (rising sea levels), death by pollution, death by mutual

annihilation and death by starvation or pestilence: **the divinity of the Christian faith!** Our Rescuer is divine, our faith is divine and Christianity itself is divine! In this Christianity is exceptional; it is one of a kind, not one among many! It is not merely one religion among many options—treating it as one of the word religions is itself a travesty. Christianity is one of a kind by virtue of its divinity. It rises above comparative religions because of its incomparable divinity.

Yes, this world, which is God's, the Lord who created all of it has come from heaven to take back. This world is even redeemed divinely! Yes, and all history belongs to the Lord; its trajectory is determined by Him. And everything that has happened, or will happen falls within the compass of His absolute, free and sovereign will. He says, **I am the Lord, there is none besides Me.** (Isaiah 45:5) He declares what I proclaim.

When I have declared the divinity of our faith, I am pointing out its origin and source in the very being of God Himself. Therefore our faith is heaven-sent. Everything we have is *gifted to us by God*, but faith is outstanding in its divinity. Do not ever, ever surrender that truth to the world, or the opinion shapers. Popular culture has a fixation with “shape-shifters” like the Greek God Proteus¹ (see Homer's “Old Man of the Sea”) which elevates the idea of flexible, adaptable and versatility (the “protean”).

Gal. 3:7 Therefore, recognize that it is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham. 8 The Scripture, foreseeing that God [a]²would justify the [b]Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, “All the nations will be blessed in you.” 9 So then, those who are of faith are blessed with [c]Abraham, the believer.

10 For all who are of works of [d]the Law are under a curse; for it is written: “Cursed is everyone who does not abide by all the things written in the book of the Law, to do them.” 11 Now, that no one is justified [e]by [f]the Law before God is evident; for, “[g]the righteous one will live by

¹ In Greek mythology, **Proteus** (/ˈproʊtiəs, -tjuːs/;^[1] Ancient Greek: Πρωτεύς, *Prōteus*) is an early prophetic sea-god or god of rivers and oceanic bodies of water, one of several deities whom **Homer** calls the “**Old Man of the Sea**” (*halios gerôn*).^[2] Some who ascribe a specific domain to Proteus call him the god of “elusive sea change”, which suggests the constantly changing nature of the sea or the liquid quality of water. He can foretell the future, but, in a **mytheme** familiar to several cultures, will change his shape to avoid doing so; he answers only to those who are capable of capturing him. From this feature of Proteus comes the **adjective protean**, meaning “versatile”, “mutable”, or “capable of assuming many forms”. “Protean” has positive connotations of flexibility, versatility and adaptability Wikipedia

²Footnotes

- a. Galatians 3:8 Lit *justifies*
- b. Galatians 3:8 Lit *nations*
- c. Galatians 3:9 Lit *the believing Abraham*
- d. Galatians 3:10 Or *law*
- e. Galatians 3:11 Or *in*
- f. Galatians 3:11 Or *law*
- g. Galatians 3:11 Or *the one who is righteous by faith will live*
- h. Galatians 3:12 Or *And*
- i. Galatians 3:12 Or *based on*
- j. Galatians 3:12 I.e., the statutes of the Law
- k. Galatians 3:12 I.e., the statutes of the Law
- l. Galatians 3:13 Or *cross*; lit *wood*; see Deut 21:23

faith.” 12 [h]However, the Law is not [i]of faith; on the contrary, “The person who performs [i]them will live by [k]them.” 13 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us—for it is written: “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a [i]tree”— 14 in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham would come to the Gentiles, so that we would receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

Pay attention to the centrality of faith in this passage! Such is the divine faith of which I speak. “May we as a church always believe that as long as we are resting upon the strength of God, nothing can hurt us.” (Charles Spurgeon, Sermon #814) Listen as I spell out some of the attributes of divine faith *that come through the power of the Holy Spirit in nine tenets*:

- a. **The just shall live by faith** means that divine faith quickens . . . yes, it fills us with the life-giving air of heaven; it is the vital sign of spiritual life; it is what God breathed into Adam at the beginning and that same breath is breathed into us by Christ at our rebirth!
- b. Faith leads to repentance because he who has received faith believes the testimony of God’s own Son! His confidence is in the atoning blood of Jesus!
- c. As faith grows, the believer increases in power and that on a rising flood of assurance, or holy confidence advanced by sacred energy.
- d. Faith is imperishable just as our new life is incorruptible. It produces nobility/dignity in character as we appropriate our place as God’s royal priesthood—that being our saints’ inheritance in the Kingdom. It renders us placid, serene and imperturbable (while others panic and lose their minds!) and as we become more fearless, less anxious our lives improve in both vigor and purpose. Having the mind of Christ translates into knowing what we are here for and what we are to be doing!
- e. This imparted life (faith!) can be likened to “a holy fury, a sacred purifying fire of a boundless and unfettered nature”(Zeal for Your House hath consumed me! -Psalm 69:9) imparted to every believer and not just a special few!
- f. All the joy of the spiritual life depends upon faith. “Joy is a welcome angel, but *it will not tarry where faith does not entertain it; spiritual joy is a bird of paradise which will build its nest only among the branches of faith; faith must pipe (play music) or joy will not dance.*”

“Doubts and fears never could strike so much as a spark with which to light the smallest candle to cheer a Christian, but simple trust in Jesus makes the sun to rise in his strength with healing beneath his wings—even upon those that sit in the valley of the shadow of death. In proportion as you lean on Christ—in that proportion shall life’s burden grow light, heaven’s joys grow real, and your whole being more elevated.” (Spurgeon)

- g. All our growth in the spiritual life depends upon our faith. “And so with the Christian; *if he is living, he will grow.* He must make advances. It is not possible for the Christian to sit still and remain in the same state month after month; but if he is to increase in spiritual riches, he must of necessity exert a constant and increasing faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.” (Spurgeon)

h. There is liberty in the spiritual life of faith; it is a grand thing, true freedom. “Where that liberty is maintained constantly, and the energy is kept up, you will need much faith; for the fading of faith will be the withering of devotion, liberty will degenerate into license, and *the energy of your life will drive, (peter out) into confidence in yourself*.

“Faith enriches the soil of the heart; faith fills our treasuries with the choicest gold, and loads our tables with the daintiest food for our souls. By faith we shall do valiantly, stopping lions’ mouths, and quenching violent flames; but faith in Jesus, the Savior, faith in the heavenly Father, faith in the Holy Spirit, this we must have, or we perish like foam upon the waters.” (Spurgeon)

i. Faith is operative in our daily lives, permeating all of it. “In all positions of life, a real faith is to the believer like the hair of Samson in which his great strength lies. It is his Moses’ rod dividing seas of difficulty, his Elijah’s chariot in which he mounts above the earth.

Some of us who can now speak with ease were once very diffident in public; those preachers who are now most useful were poor stammerers before their gifts were developed, and those who are our best teachers, and most successful soul-winners, were not always so; *but they had faith*, and they pressed forward, and God helped them *as assuredly He will help you!* (Spurgeon)

Now, why are they wrong about the end of the world? Here’s the short answer: **the divinity of the Christian faith**. Yes, both the church and our faith have divine origins; they are from heaven! *Do you believe this?* And because we know the ending, God is victorious, as revealed in biblical prophecy. It is really extraordinary to hear anyone say, “The church is in danger.” That’s not how I read Scripture at all: the world needs to fear the church.

“Faith in the life of the church is,” as Charles Spurgeon preaches, “in opposition to reliving despondency.” What is despondency but “a state of low spirits, dejection, caused by loss of hope or courage.” Melancholy, sadness and gloom (the “dismal science” of economics), depression and despair are all states of dejection. And against these we have: joy, hopefulness, and cheerfulness. Dastardly timidity and shameful cowardice declare the church’s doom, end, demise . . . “*Christians with their Bibles, and all the truths in the Bibles, Christians with their ministers, and all their earnestness, Christians with the Holy Spirit, with God’s promises, with the foundations against which the gates of hell shall not prevail—and yet in danger!?*” With truth, earnestness, the Holy Spirit and all the promises of God as foundations, it is not possible but the shoe is on the other foot: the church is not endangered from the world! No, it is the world that is in danger from the church. The church will endure, the church will vanquish, conquer and triumph . . . **Only believe**. Jesus commands this on his way to Jairus’ house.

Mark 5:35 While He was still speaking, people *came from the house of the synagogue official, saying, “Your daughter has died; why bother the Teacher further?” 36 But Jesus, overhearing what was being spoken, *said to the synagogue official, “Do not be afraid, only [a]believe.” 37 And He allowed no one to accompany Him except Peter, [b]James, and John the brother of [c]James.

“No church can make progress till she believes enough in her God to be sure that in Him she is strong; while she imagines that she is weak, she is weak!

Fear paralyzes her; dread kills her energies, but when she believes in the divine Strength with which she is encountered as with a golden belt, then she marches on with certainty of triumph. **Amen.**