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The Power (Chapter 5) Pages 54-55

By Timothy Keller

The disciples woke [Jesus] and said to him, "Teacher, don't you care if we drown?" He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Quiet! Be still!" Then the wind died down and it was completely calm. He said to his disciples, "Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith? They were terrified and asked each other, "Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!" (Mark 4:38-41)

Why were [the disciples] more terrified in the calm than they were in the storm? Because Jesus was as unmanageable as the storm itself. The storm had immense power—they couldn't control it. Jesus had infinitely more power, so they had even less control over him. But there's a huge difference. A storm doesn't love you. Nature is going to wear you down, destroy you. If you live a long time, eventually your body will give out and you'll die. And maybe it will happen sooner—through an earthquake, a fire, or some other disaster. Nature is violent and overwhelming—it's unmanageable power, and it's going to get you sooner or later. You may say, that's true, but if I go to Jesus, he's not under my control either. He lets things happen that I don't understand. He doesn't do things according to my plan, or in a way that makes sense to me. But if Jesus is God, then he's got to be great enough to have some reasons to let you go through things you can't understand. His power is unbounded, but so are his wisdom and his love. Nature is indifferent to you, but Jesus is filled with untamable love for you. If the disciples had really known that Jesus loved them, if they had really understood that he is both powerful and loving, they would not have been scared. Their premise, that if Jesus loved them he wouldn't let bad things happen to them, was wrong. He can love somebody and still let bad things happen to them, because he is God—because he knows better than they do.

If you have a God great enough and powerful enough to be mad at because he doesn't stop your suffering, you also have a God who's great enough and powerful enough to have reasons that you can't understand. You can't have it both ways. My teacher Elisabeth Elliot put it beautifully in two brief sentences: "God is God and since he is God, he is worthy of my worship and my service. I will find rest nowhere else but in his will, and that will is necessarily infinitely, unspeakably beyond my largest notions of what he is up to."¹ If you're at the mercy of the storm, its power is unmanageable and it doesn't love you. The only place you're safe is in the will of God. But because he's God and you're not, the

¹ Elisabeth Elliot, *Through Gates of Splendor: 40th Anniversary Edition* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1981), p. 267

will of God is necessarily, immeasurably, unspeakably beyond your largest notions of what he is up to. Is he safe? “Of course he’s not safe. Who said anything about being safe? But he’s good. He’s the King.”²

Timothy Keller was born and raised in Pennsylvania and educated at Bucknell University, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, and Westminster Theological Seminary. He was first a pastor in Hopewell, Virginia. In 1989 he started Redeemer Presbyterian Church in Manhattan with his wife, Kathy and their three sons. Today, Redeemer has more than five thousand regular Sunday attendees and has helped to start nearly two hundred new churches around the world. Also the author of *Generous Justice*, *Counterfeit Gods*, *The Prodigal God*, and the New York Times bestseller, *The Reason for God*, he lives in New York City with his family.

² C.S. Lewis, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (New York: Harper-Collins, 1978), p.81