

MEDITATIONS ON THE APOSTLES' CREED



October 2023

“ALMIGHTY”—in Latin, accusative case, “*omnipotentem*” (from which the word “omnipotent” is derived). “Almighty” is the very first adjective to appear in the Apostles’ Creed. As an adjective, it may function as a modifier, describing a particular attribute of God (i.e., “I believe in God the Father almighty”). Or, it may function as a substantive, identifying God by yet another moniker (i.e., “I believe in God the Father, the Almighty One”). But which is it? Is “almighty” a characteristic of divinity, or is it another name for God?

The name “Almighty” (παντοκράτωρ, pantokrator) is used ten times in the New Testament as an address for God: once in 2 Corinthians 6:18 and nine times in the book of Revelation. In every occurrence, it not only names God, but also witnesses to God’s incontestable power over creation, evil, and human destiny. In other words, the name of the Almighty attests to God’s quality of being omnipotent.

From Latin meaning “all-potent,” omnipotence implies the power to create, the power to impose meaning and purpose, the power to enact one’s will without challenge or resistance from any other power. To be omnipotent, to have all power, then, implies that there is nothing that God cannot do. As the angel Gabriel declared to Mary, “Nothing will be impossible with God” (Luke 1:37).

Of course, this definition of divine omnipotence invites several questions. Can the Almighty bring into existence things that are unreal, or make falsehoods true, or declare evil to be a virtue? Do reality, truth, and morality possess unassailable qualities that even God’s omnipotence cannot surpass?

Let us consider this age-old paradox: If nothing is impossible with God, then surely God can create a rock that he cannot lift. But if he cannot lift the rock, then God is not omnipotent. And if he can lift the rock, then he could not create an unliftable rock to start with, and again would not be omnipotent. According to the French philosopher René Descartes, it is certainly within the purview of God’s omnipotence both to create a rock that he cannot lift, and to lift a rock that he cannot lift. For Descartes, we human beings should not presume to say what an omnipotent deity can or cannot do, even if what he does is a logical contradiction. If God is the author of the rules of logic, then God can surely expunge such annoying rules.

Now, even if we were to assume that Descartes is correct and that the statement, “God can lift a rock that he cannot lift,” can be metaphysically true, we would be forced to concede that such a statement is logically meaningless. Our inability to comprehend a power that can defy logic really adds nothing to our understanding of omnipotence. To paraphrase the medieval theologian Thomas Aquinas, “We can attribute omnipotence to God, not contradiction.” Or, as C.S. Lewis colloquially said, “You may attribute miracles to Him, but not nonsense.” If Aquinas and Lewis are correct, and God’s omnipotence does not include logical contradictions, then what about moral contradictions? Does God have the power to lie? If all things are possible with God, can he sin?

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ELDERS CLASS OF

David Deaton	2024
James Exline	2024
Bonnie Gray	2024
Eric Everett	2025
Lucie Nelson	2025
Jennifer Wilke-Deaton	2025
Philip Gump	2026
Paul Hager	2025
Bill Mitchell	2025

DEACONS CLASS OF

Linda Adams	2024
Donna Cox	2024
Lynn Shearon	2024
Sue Reeves	2025
Julie Stanley	2025
Gene Wolf	2025
Jennifer Brubaker	2026
Kathy Shew	2026
Coy Weldon	2026

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A basic tenet of Christianity is that God is by nature perfectly good and does not sin. Accordingly, some Christians have proposed that God is bound by his nature and is incapable of doing anything that is not loving, beneficent, and righteous. So, if God cannot sin, can he truly be all-powerful? Others have proposed that God remains omnipotent, but chooses not to exercise his power to sin. (Of course, this begs the question: “If God is capable of sinning, in what way, then, is God perfectly good?” But this is a question for another time.)

The medieval theologian Anselm of Canterbury proposed a provocative solution to the moral conundrum of omnipotence. Anselm claims that the ability to sin is not actually a power, but a weakness. Because God is all-powerful, there is no weakness in him; so, God is incapable of sinning.

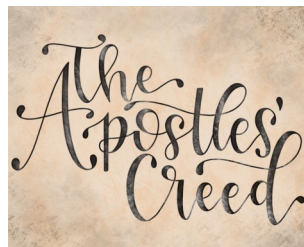
While sinning might not be among the powers of an omnipotent deity, it is most certainly a common trait of human beings. Perhaps, as Anselm implies, the ability to sin is not a power, but the inevitable result of human weakness. Indeed, we human beings need the strength of God Almighty to do what God requires; we need power “to do justice and to love kindness and to walk humbly” with our God (Micah 6:8).

We often believe that we are responsible for our own moral actions. We believe that, whenever we sin, we are culpable; and whenever we behave nobly, we are commendable. This sense of responsibility for our behavior results from our presumption that we are free from external forces which might otherwise coerce us to sin. If we do not possess the power to act of our own accord, but are constrained to act according to the compulsive powers of God Almighty, then divine judgment of our actions would be meaningless. Could God justly hold us accountable for our sins if our actions are predestined by his omnipotence? No, we must possess at least enough power to refrain from sinning.

So, what is the relationship between humanity’s power (or lack thereof) and the omnipotence of the Almighty? If God is indeed almighty and possesses all of the power that there is, then whatever power we might wield is bestowed only by God’s grace. God is so powerful as to be able and willing to surrender power to us that we might have the ability to act morally. So omnipotent is God that he graciously and compassionately sacrifices his almightiness so that we can possess the ability to love him or reject him. And yet, God rightly retains his almightiness to reclaim his power from us or to wield it through us.

From his gracious omnipotence, God has given us our faith. “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God—not the result of works, so that no one may boast” (Ephesians 2:8-9). And from that same gracious omnipotence, he has empowered us to affirm our faith in God Almighty. To believe in the Almighty (in both name and quality) is to believe in a God who is loving, compassionate, and sacrificial; and at the same time, it is to believe in a God who providentially guides the destiny of us all.

“Hallelujah! For the Lord God the Almighty reigns.”
(Revelation 19:6b)



Back to school!

Preschool has had a great first month.



In the month of October we will be having:

- **picture day**
- **a field trip to Baldwin Farm**
- **and Dress up Day for both classes!**

If you would like to donate candy, please do so by October 20th. Thank you!



**BLESSINGS
ON YOUR
BIRTHDAY**



- 1 Betty Park Adams
- Rhonda Orthenburger
- 11 Julie Stanley
- Eden Stanley
- 12 Dan Lichty
- 15 Paul Hager
- 17 Beth Underwood
- 18 Curtis Christian
- 23 Nancy Crider
- 25 Abigail Adkins
- 26 Phillip Seyfrit
- 29 Shelby Dale Lamb
- 30 Arleita Dirne

- 1 Kevin Crump
- 3 John Harter
- 4 David Coleman
- 8 Chris Smart
- 10 Taylor Losson
- 11 Nancy Brubaker
- John Florell
- 13 Dwight Barkley
- 15 Ed Sigmon
- 17 Lindsey Glass
- 20 Praveena Salins
- 21 Hee-Young Shin
- Abby Toutant
- Ella Deaton
- 22 Suzanne Leung
- Nancy Carrico
- 24 Frank Milanese
- 28 Linda Adams
- John Gump
- 29 Chris Laird

GREETINGS, My Christian Friends: The Lord Be With You!

Starting soon, the church Fellowship Committee will be offering monthly spiritual hikes as an intergenerational fellowship event. Once a month, on a Saturday or Sunday afternoon (weather permitting) we will get a group together to go hiking at different places of sacred beauty and inspiration. We will hike, take photos, read a passage of scripture, have prayer, and perhaps break bread together at a local eatery.



This is a great opportunity for fellowship, witness, inspiration, spiritual growth, even a little exercise and lots of fun!

OCTOBER 7

East Pinnacle (Indian Fort, Berea)

FEBRUARY

Brushy Fork/Welch Mountain Trail (Berea)

NOVEMBER

Raven Run Nature Sanctuary (Fayette County)

MARCH

Natural Bridge State Park (Powell County)

DECEMBER

Eagle's Nest (Indian Fort, Berea)

APRIL

Anglin Falls (Rockcastle County)

JANUARY

Gray's Arch (Red River Gorge, Powell County)

MAY

Cumberland Falls State Park (McCreary County)

Spiritual Fellowship Hike!
07 October – Saturday Morning
East Pinnacle (Indian Fort, Berea)

This will be an intergenerational hike (weather permitting). We will hike, read scripture, pray, and afterward eat at a local restaurant. All who wish to participate in the hike are to meet at the Indian Fort Mountain Parking Lot (also known as the Berea College Forestry Outreach Center Parking Lot) at 8:30 am. ALL ARE WELCOME!!!



Evening Women's Circle
Tuesday, October 10
6:30 pm
 in the parlor

Rebecca Esther Circle
 Tuesday, October 17
 10:30 a.m.
 in the parlor

Stewardship Kick-off!

October is a time when we look at stewardship and what it means to us and to First Presbyterian Church. There will be a Kick-Off luncheon on Sunday, October 15, where you will receive your stewardship packet and learn about the plans for our congregation in 2024. You won't want to miss this! More information will be given about this later.

November 5 will be Stewardship Commitment Sunday. At that time, pledges will be presented during the worship service, followed by a Celebration Luncheon. There will be more about this later, but please mark both October 15 and November 5 on your calendar.



MISSION.....a body of people sent

On October 1 we have the **Peace and Global Witness Special Offering**. This encourages the church of our time to embrace God's mission with those locally and around the world, as active peacemakers at all times. A gift to Peace and Global Witness enables the church to collaborate in our proclamation of Christ's peace. As in 2 Thessalonians 3:16 "Peace at all times in all ways".

Thank you from your Mission Committee

YOUTH GROUP!

Youth Calendar 2023-2024

Oct 7-8	Lock-In at the church
Nov. 18	Craft Fair Service Project
Dec. 3	Parent's Day Out
Dec. 10	Christmas Pageant Practice
Dec. 17	Christmas Pageant
Dec. 17	Christmas Scavenger Hunt
Feb. 10	Souper Bowl of Caring Cook Day
Feb. 11	Souper Bowl of Caring Serve Day
March 24	Easter Egg Hunt
May 12	Youth Sunday
July 17-21	Middle School Montreat

Save the Dates!

Youth Lock In

Our next big thing for the youth group is our annual Lock-In. We will meet in the church at 7 on Saturday, Oct. 7. We will play games, do some Bible study, go to Get Air in Lexington, hit up the Waffle House and attend church in the morning as a group. This event is open to all Middle School and High School youth and their friends. Permission slips are being handed out at prayer breakfast and Sunday School. This is always a fun and important time for our youth! Looking forward to seeing you there!



We would love for every member of our church to be involved this year. Whether it is the donations of your possessions, your time, your talents, or your patronage. If you have never attended the sale or been a part of this effort, you are missing a phenomenal opportunity for food, fun & fellowship.

If you have any questions or would like to volunteer in any way, please contact either Jennifer or David at their contact info listed above.



Calling All Cooks!

Our church's Arts and Crafts for Missions Event is just around the corner. Please help make the bake sale a success. The following items will be needed:

- cakes
- pies
- cookies
- brownies
- breads
- bar cookies

Our guests will have the option to pick and choose any dozen cookies of their choice for one price. In order for this to work please provide three to four dozen cookies or brownies. We will place the different types of cookies and brownies on platters so people will be able to see what is available and select any combination for their dozen.

Volunteers are needed to help work the booth during the following time slots **(9:00-11:00, 11:00-1:00, or 1:00-3:00)**. If you are willing to provide help with the bake sale, please contact (coordinator needed)

Items are needed by 8:00 am on Saturday morning, November 18th or any time Friday night, November 17th.





ARTS & CRAFTS FOR MISSIONS

Sat., Nov. 18 from 9 AM – 3 PM.

Should you know of crafters who might be interested, please contact Jennifer Ward (893.6335) or David Deaton at (200.4099) as soon as possible in order for an invitation to be extended to them.

Again, we are having some gently used items that we are soliciting from you. All donations are welcomed beginning **October 15**.

- **BOOKS** (please DO NOT donate love stories or National Geographic), **DVDs, PUZZLES, CDS, GAMES, and VIDEOS.** These are to be placed in the back of the Fellowship Hall under the clock. (*coordinator needed!*)
- **TOYS** are to be placed in the coat alcove against the left wall. (*coordinator needed!*)
- **JEWELRY** is to be placed on the square table in the parlor. (*coordinator needed*)
- **SCARVES, PURSES, GENTLY USED LUGGAGE, BACKPACKS, LAPTOP BAGS, COSMETIC CASES, AND ZIPPER POUCHES** are to be placed on the pew on the funeral home side of the Fellowship Hall. (*coordinator needed!*)
- The **SILENT AUCTION** has been such a success in the past thanks to your generous donations, and the committee hopes that this year will be no exception. Please place your donated items neatly in the **Parlor** at end closest to the office no later than Friday morning, November 17th. Suggested items include small furniture items, gift cards/gift certificates you have received as gifts or would like to donate, collectibles, Thanksgiving and Christmas decorations, house wares, table linens, silver, brass, china, pottery, ceramics, framed prints, lamps, decorative boxes and baskets, etc. Also remember your Good Works TIME/TALENTS/SERVICES! Suggestions for Good Works Donations include, but are not limited to, *putting up Christmas tree or decorations, baking services, dinner delivery services, babysitting, consulting services, yard work, etc.* If you have any questions or need an item picked up from your home, please call (*coordinator needed*).
- The **SILENT AUCTION, GENERAL STORE and \$ TABLE** are all integral parts of our sale. If you are donating something of value that you would like a reserve price applied, please tell us! Placement of donations to any particular department of the sale may be moved to the silent auction to maximize charitable proceeds at the discretion of the Arts and Crafts for Mission Co-Chairpersons, Jennifer Ward or David Deaton.

I'd like to share some scripture with you today. Deuteronomy 6:4-9 is the most quoted passage of scripture in the Old Testament. It's known as the Shema. It gets this name from the Hebrew word for "to hear" as this is the word with which the passage begins.

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates. Deut. 6:4-9

The Shema was an important passage to ancient Israel. The first verse almost serves as Israel's mission statement. It sums up the whole of Israel's theology in a couple of easy to remember sentences. These sentences make the proclamation that there is only one God, and that Israel is to love that God with every part of their being. This is certainly an important message, and I fully believe that Israel's ancient mission still holds true for the church today, but it's the following verses that I would like to focus on for this article.

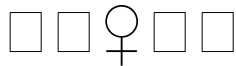
I would like to focus on these later verses because they paint a picture of what it means to be a community of faith and they give us an idea of what the real purpose of Christian Education is. The real purpose of Christian Education is to create a learning environment like the one described above. As Sunday school teachers and Bible study leaders, we are to create a place where people can speak openly about their faith and learn from each other's experiences. Our goal is to get people talking about how they have felt God's love and where they have seen God's hand working in their lives and this shouldn't just be happening in our classrooms either. It should be happening while our students "sit at home" or "walk along the road". It should be happening in our homes with our families, as parents share their faith with their children and one generation impresses God's commandments on the next. It should be happening through our actions, as God's commands are bound to our hands and foreheads and it should be happening constantly from the moment we wake to the moment we lie down again.

Christian Education isn't just the hour before worship each Sunday. Christian Education is the act of incorporating God into our everyday lives. It is learning to live with God's commandments written on our hearts and it is loving God even as God loves us through the gift of His son, Jesus Christ. It is living together in such a way that we learn from each other, find encouragement in each other's triumphs and comfort in each other's compassion. This kind of Christian education isn't limited to the official Sunday school teachers and church leaders. This kind of Christian Education is everyone's responsibility and it is more effective because of that. My prayer and goal for this congregation is that we can learn to live like the community in Deuteronomy 6:4-9, and I believe that with God's help, we can.

Rally Day!

Thanks to everyone who came out for our Rally Day kick off this last month and thanks to everyone who's hard work made Rally Day possible and to all of our teachers for all they do for our Sunday School and children's worship programming throughout the year! If you missed Rally Day, one of the things we did was play a game where we used Emojis to depict different Bible stories. These can be found on the bulletin board outside Joel's office, if you'd like to try your hand at figuring out which stories go with which Emojis. Congratulations to Dan Cummings who was able to stump the DCE with his own emoji creation!

Here it is; can you figure it out?



FPC Youth
Prayer Breakfast

Tuesdays at 6:45am on school days
At Purdy's Coffee on Big Hill
call 4-12-926-2581
to arrange rides, if needed

***EKU HOMECOMING
PARADE TENT
FRIDAY,
OCT. 13, 7:00 PM
Set-up 5:30 pm***



Volunteers are needed for the Hospitality Tent on the church lawn. The tent provides free cookies, snacks and treats to parade-goers as a way to share FPC's hospitality with the people of Richmond! Please drop off your goodies, both homemade or bought, in the Fellowship Hall kitchen before noon on Friday, October 13.



News Brief from Session

- Fellowship Committee to meet after church Sunday, October 1
- 15 vendors already signed up for Arts and Crafts for Missions on Saturday, November 18.
- Session, Deacons, and staff to participate with Boundary Training in October.
- Proposed 2024 budget ready to present at the Stewardship luncheon on Sunday, October 15.
- Administration Committee exploring ways to fund repair of the Bell Tower.

Clerk of Session
Melody Mitchell



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FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
<i>1 World Communion Sunday</i> <i>Peace & Global Witness Offering</i> Fellowship Committee mtg. noon	<i>2 Bible Study 10:30</i>	<i>3 Tues. Crew 9-11</i> <i>Mission mtg. 7:00</i>	<i>4 Bible Study 6:30</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>7 Hike 8:30 am</i> <div style="border: 1px dashed black; padding: 2px; display: inline-block;">Youth Lock-in!</div>
<i>8</i> <div style="border: 1px dashed black; padding: 2px; display: inline-block;">Lock-in</div>	<i>9 Office Closed—Columbus Day</i> <i>Bible Study cancelled</i>	<i>10 Tues. Crew 9-11</i> <i>Evening Circle 6:30</i>	<i>11 Bible Study cancelled</i>	<i>12 Needle Arts Fellowship 11:30</i>	<i>13 ECU Homecoming Parade 7:00</i>	<i>14</i>
			CURTIS ON VACATION			
<i>15 Stewardship Kickoff Lunch!</i>	<i>16 Bible Study 10:30</i>	<i>17 Tues. Crew 9-11</i> <i>Pres. Women 10:30</i> <i>CE mtg. 4:30</i>	<i>18 Bible Study 6:30</i>	<i>19</i>	<i>20</i>	<i>21</i>
<i>22</i>	<i>23 Bible Study 10:30</i>	<i>24 Tues. Crew 9-11</i> <i>Session mtg. 7:00</i>	<i>25 Welcome Wednesday/Pizza Party 6:00</i>	<i>26</i>	<i>27</i>	<i>28</i>
<i>29</i>	<i>30 Bible Study 10:30</i>	<i>31 Tues. Crew 9-11</i>				