

# The Prayer for Power

Ephesians 1:15-23

15 Therefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints,  
16 do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers:  
17 that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him,  
18 the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints,  
19 and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power  
20 which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places,  
21 far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come.  
22 And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church,  
23 which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

I read a story of an old woman who lived in the hills of Tennessee. She went to a great deal of trouble to have electrical power installed in her home. After a few months the Power Company noticed that she used very little electricity. They sent a meter reader out to check on the matter. He asked the old woman, **"Don't you ever use electricity?"** **"Oh yes"** she replied, **"I turn it on every evening to see how to light my lamps."** She didn't know the power she had because she didn't put it to use.

Today we will finish looking at Paul's prayer for the Ephesian believers in Ephesians 1:15-23. We said last week that Paul has been praying that God would give these Christians the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Jesus Christ. He prays that the eyes of their heart would be enlightened so that they would know three things: The hope of His calling, the riches of His inheritance, and His exceeding great power toward us who believe.

Paul's overall point in this third request is pretty clear: God's mighty power that saved us is the same power that has raised Jesus Christ from the dead and has exalted Him over all rule and authority in the universe. Christ is the head of His body, the church, of which we are members if we have believed on Him. Therefore, this mighty power of God is presently available to us and at work in and through us.

Here's the problem I have. As a pastor, I often deal with Christians who are defeated by sin. Some are enslaved to pornography or sexual immorality, or to alcohol or drugs. Some have ruined their marriages and families because of anger and verbal abuse. Some are just plain worldly, wasting their lives by frivolous activities that have no bearing on the kingdom of God. They spend their money just as the world does, with no thought of laying up treasures in heaven. They spend their time living for themselves, with no thought of seeking first God's kingdom and righteousness. They feed their minds with godless TV shows and movies, but don't read and study God's Word. What is worse, I often hear of

pastors and Christian leaders who live like this! My question is, "Where is God's mighty power in the lives of these people?"

So the question is, how can we reconcile what Paul says here about God's mighty power toward us who believe with what we see all around us? What do these words mean and how do they apply to us? How can we legitimately experience the reality of God's power in our personal lives?

To grapple with these verses, we must remember what Paul prays in verses 18 & 19, "that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know ... what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe." We will not be able to know God's mighty power unless He opens the eyes of our hearts. Just as we said last week that God wants us to know the hope of His calling and the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, God wants us to know His power that is at work in us. So we must continually ask Him for understanding. It is a life-long process.

**and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power** (Eph 1:19 NKJV)

### **III. Know the Greatness of His Power (vv.19-20).**

#### **A. God's Power is in the life of Every Believer (v.19).**

There are four words in this verse that speak of God's power. The first word "**power**" comes from *dunamis* from which we get "dynamite" and "dynamic." Dynamite has inherent **internal power**. By its very nature, the stuff it is made of, it is packed full of power. We have an inherent internal power because the Holy Spirit of power dwells in us and has filled us.

Then the other three words describe how this power, this dynamic, works in us. He says that power is "**according to the working of His mighty power**." The "**working**." is also *energia* from which we get our word energy, or energetic. This is **working power**. It means the energizing force of the Holy Spirit that enables us to do good works for God. This is the Holy Spirit's power put to work in us.

*Kratos* or the "**power**" is translated "**strength**" in NIV and NASB. This is **strong power**. It refers to God's dominion or control. In Ephesians 6:10 where Paul describes our spiritual armor, this is the strength of God that enables us to stand up against the attacks of the devil.

*Ischus* or "**might**" refers to endowed power or **vital power**, like the might you would gain if you worked out your muscles every day.

Listen to this translation from the *Jerusalem Bible*, "...**how infinitely great is the power He has exercised for us believers This you can tell from the strength of His power at work in Christ when He used it to raise Him from the dead and make Him sit at His right hand...**"

Paul wants us to not only know God's "**power**," but "**the exceeding greatness of His power toward us**." We see God's power through nature, but it is "**the exceeding greatness of His power**" that is in us. "**Incomparably great power**" says NIV. Paul uses the word *hyperballon* literally meaning it is in a completely different sphere altogether. It is out of this world!

This is not necessarily a power that He gives to us but a power that He works in us. Some people have the idea that they can command God's power. We hear of people who "bind" this or "claim" that in God's power.

They act like they have something the rest of us miss. They remind me of Simon the Sorcerer in Acts 8, a man who tried to buy the power of the Holy Spirit.

The "**power**" Paul prays that we know is not a second blessing, a mystical experience or a new manifestation from God to seek. All the power that we will ever need to live for Him is already present in every believer because the same Holy Spirit that powerfully raised Jesus from the dead lives in every believer.

Paul's prayer is not that we will get more power but that "**the eyes**" or our "**heart**" will be "**enlightened**" so that we may realize the power that is already ours!

God is already working in you all of His exceeding great power. He has all the power to save you and to keep you forever. He is working in you all the power you need to witness, to overcome temptation and sin, and to endure whatever trials may come your way. Paul is not praying that God would give us this power, he is praying that we would know that we have it—that we would realize it and tap into it!

#### **B. The Same Power that raised Jesus from the Dead works in Us (v.20).**

V.20 is very specific about God's power. It tells us that God uses the same power in our lives that He used "**when He raised Him [Jesus] from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places.**"

Paul prayed in Phil.3:10 that He also might be further "**enlightened**" about the power of God in his life. He said, "**that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in His sufferings.**"

There are times in all of our lives when we may wonder if God can do all that He has said He can do. If you want to be sure of God's exceeding great power, just look at what He did in sending Jesus to this world. Jesus was born of a virgin, lived a sinless life, and performed amazing wonders and miracles. He was totally obedient to His Father's will. When He died on the cross He bore all the sin of all the world. He became sin for us paying the price for our redemption with His own blood. However He did not stay dead. Ps.16:10 says, "**Nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption.**" By the "**working**" of His "**mighty power**" God "**raised Him from the dead.**"

The same power that wouldn't allow Jesus to remain in the grave will not allow God's promises to you to be broken.

#### **C. What is the Purpose for God's Power in our Lives?**

I don't know if you've heard the story of C. T. Studd the great Christian missionary. He went to a fair years and years ago and was captivated by a man pumping a well. The thing that grabbed him was how fast he was pumping and how long he was able to pump. He said to himself, "No man can do that. What kind of vitamins does he take? What kind of exercise program is he on?" He walked over to get a closer look. He found that the man dressed in Oriental garb was not a man. He was a stick figure. His elbows were hinges. He was not pumping the well, the well was pumping him. It was an artesian well. You see, there was a power that turned the man.

I believe that's exactly what Paul is saying. He says, "I want you to know something. I want you to know it's not you doing it for God. It's God doing it in and through you as you bow before Him." Listen, it's a 200% relationship. It's 100% my willingness to obey, yield and bow, but it's also 100% His power, His presence and what He can do in and through me what I cannot do and certainly will never deserve.

It is important to note that Paul is not praying that God would give us this mighty power, but rather that the eyes of our hearts would be enlightened to know that this power has already been displayed in us if we believe in Jesus Christ. Since Paul goes on in the next chapter (in 2:1-6) to state that when we were dead in our sins, God raised us up and seated us with Christ in the heavenly places, his point here is that the same power that raised Christ from the dead and seated Him at God's right hand is the power that saved us. Paul wants us to know that if we have believed in Christ, it did not come from human will power or reasoning. No, it came from God's mighty power, the same power that raised Jesus Christ from the dead.

It seems to me that this may be a large part of the answer to the problem of those who claim to be Christians, but are not living in accordance with God's mighty power. These people need honestly to ask, "Do I have new life in Jesus Christ? Whereas I once was dead in my sins, am I now alive to God through His resurrection power?" It takes nothing less than a resurrection from the dead to make a genuine Christian!

#### **IV. Know the Supremacy of His Authority (vv.21-23).**

##### **A. Jesus is Supreme over all other Powers (v.21).**

V. 20 says that when Jesus was "**raised from the dead**" and ascended into heaven by the "**mighty power**" of God, He was "**seated**" at the "**right hand**" of the Father "**in the heavenly places.**"

*First*, the fact that He was "**seated**" means that His work was complete. Hebrews teaches us that His sacrifice was "**once for all.**" *Second*, the fact that Jesus is at the Father's "**right hand**" indicates His authority. The term "right hand man" refers to someone who has authority to act for another. The Father has given Jesus supreme authority.

V.20 says that Jesus is "**seated... at His right hand in the heavenly places.**" V.21 tells us more specifically where that is. It is "**far above.**" Jesus has authority "**far above all principality**" which means "rule" or "rulers." There never has been an aristocrat with power to match Jesus. No monarch on earth will ever command an empire like His!

Jesus is "**far above all... power**" or "authority." He is the ultimate authority. Further, He is "**far above all... might**" or strength. No one can match Him. He is "**far above all... dominion**" or control. No wonder even the demons tremble and call Him Lord!

Jesus is "**far above... every name that is named.**" The word "**name**" refers to titles. There is no king, no sovereign, no star, no angel nor demonic power that even comes close to Him. Remember what Paul wrote in **Philippians 2:9- 11**:

**9 Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him  
the name which is above every name,  
10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those**

in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth,  
**11 and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.**

Notice that Jesus is "**above all... not only in this age but also in that which is to come.**" There has never been nor will ever be anyone, anywhere or anytime who can come close to Jesus' power and authority!

When the funeral of Louis XIV was held, the cathedral was packed with mourners who were paying their final tribute to the king. The room was darkened, except for one solitary candle. That candle illuminated the great casket holding the mortal remains of the king. As the minister stood to address the audience, he reached over the pulpit and snuffed out that lone candle which was there to symbolize the greatness of the king. The room was darkened, and from the darkness he spoke four words: "**God only is great.**"

The Father has "**put all things under His feet.**" That means that nothing is higher than Jesus! Jesus controls everything. Paul explains this further in **Colossians 1:15-18**:

**15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.**

**16 For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him.**

**17 And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist.**

**18 And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.**

As we know from the Book of Acts, the believers in Ephesus came out of a culture steeped in idol worship and the occult. Demon possession was so common that some made a living by trying to cast out demons. When the Ephesian believers got saved, they burned their magic books, which amounted to a small fortune (Acts 19:11-20). Such people would not have regarded Paul's words in our text as just an interesting point for theological discussion. For them, these words were intensely practical. They knew and had been fearfully enslaved by the power of Satan. But now they had a new Master and Lord, who is seated far above not only all of the evil spirits, but even above the most powerful angels. Paul wants them to know that the power of the risen and ascended Lord Jesus Christ is available to them in their struggle against the forces of wickedness in the heavenly places (see Eph. 6:10-17). That same power is available to us if we are in Christ.

## **B. Jesus is Supreme over His Church (vv.22b-23).**

Jesus is also "**head over all things to the church which is His body.**" "**Church**" means a called out assembly. It is a term that must be understood on two levels. In most cases in the NT, it refers to individual, local assemblies. However, in a few passages like this one, the word obviously must be taken in a general sense referring to all the believers of all the ages.

One of the most familiar images of "**the church**" is that of a "**body**" with Christ as the "**head**." He alone is the ultimate and total authority. It also

means that as "**His body**" we are eternally connected with Him! We share in His resurrection, ascension, exhalation and inheritance!

We have the "**the fullness of Him who fills all in all.**" The church is the "**fullness**" of Jesus and Jesus "**fills all in all.**" A body needs a head. A bride needs a bridegroom. Branches need the vine. Sheep need a shepherd. And when God puts His church together with Jesus Christ, we become His fullness. What a wonderful thought that God values us so much!

Paul's overall point is pretty clear: God's mighty power that saved us has exalted Christ over all rule and authority in the universe. He is the head of His body, the church, of which we are members if we have believed on Him. Therefore, this mighty power of God is presently available for us.

Just before WWII in Itasca, Texas, a school fire took the lives of 263 children. After the war, they built a new school that featured "the finest sprinkler system in the world." Civic pride ran high. Honor students guided visitors on tours of the new facilities to show them the finest, the most advanced sprinkler system money could buy. Never again would Itasca be visited by such a tragedy. 7 years later it was necessary to add a new wing to the school.

Only then was it discovered that the sprinkler system had never been connected (Hughes, p.57). *As believers we have all these wonderful blessings of God. We have His exceeding great power. Are we hooked up to who we really are in Christ?*

Warren Wiersbe sums up Paul's prayer for the saints to know the power they possess writing that...

In the four Gospels, we see God's power at work in the ministry of Jesus Christ, but in the Book of Acts, we see that same power at work in ordinary men and women, members of the body of Christ. What a transformation took place in Peter's life between the end of the Gospels and the beginning of Acts! What made the difference? The resurrection power of Jesus Christ (Acts 1:8). The greatest power shortage today is not in our generators or our gas tanks. It is in our personal lives and our churches. Will Paul's prayer be answered in your life? Will you, starting today, begin to know by experience God—God's calling—God's riches—and God's power?

Are you experiencing God's mighty power to overcome temptation and live a holy life? If not, pray this prayer of Ephesians 1. Ask God to open the eyes of your heart so that you will know the surpassing greatness of His power toward you.

If you have no desire to overcome sin and to represent Christ on this earth, you may not have experienced the power of being raised from spiritual death to spiritual life. Today, ask God to give you new life in Him.