

**Valley Bible Church**  
**Sermon Notes for July 1, 2018**

**Knowing God's Power**  
**Ephesians 1:19-23**

I. Paul prays for believers to know God's glorious plan for the future (1:18)

*having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints*

- We covered two of the three specific ways that Paul wanted the Ephesians to have increased knowledge of God
- First, Paul prayed that the Ephesians might know their future hope to which God has called them in eternity past
- Second, Paul prayed that the Ephesians might know God's future glory through His inheritance of the saints
- To sum it up, Paul prays that the Ephesians might grasp the reality of their future
  - A future where they receive God and God receives them
- These first two specific ways that Paul prays for the Ephesians' knowledge are future and forward looking
- However, this third and final way that Paul prays for the Ephesians' knowledge relates directly to the present

II. Paul prays for believers to know God's great power in the present (1:19)

*19 and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might*

- First, notice the description of this great power
  - Our English text calls it the "immeasurable greatness of his power"
    - NASB - "what is the surpassing greatness of His power"
    - NET - "what is the incomparable greatness of his power"
    - NIV - "his incomparably great power"
    - NKJV - "what is the exceeding greatness of His power"
  - As you can tell, the various English translations have struggled to fully capture the immense reality of God's power that Paul is trying to describe
  - However, it is clear that Paul is speaking of the vastness of God's power
- Second, notice the direction of this great power
  - This great power is not simply manifested by God from the heavens in the most arbitrary and meaningless ways (opposing some views of Greek and Roman mythology)

- This great power from God has been purposefully directed toward His creation—namely mankind
- But we can say more, this great power from God has been specifically directed toward you who are here today
- Anyone who has entrusted their life to Jesus Christ in faith and repentance now stands as the recipient of God’s great power!
- This is the testimony of Scripture in other places
  - Acts 1:8 “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”
  - Colossians 1:29 “For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me.”
- Finally, notice the display of this great power
  - Paul sets up for elaborating on God’s display of His great power toward believers with the end of verse 19 stating, “according to the working of his great might that he worked...”
  - This is no ordinary phrase to set up for Paul to talk of God’s powerful display
  - Paul could have said, “and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, *that he showed/displayed/revealed in Christ...*”
  - Instead, Paul felt the need to heap up even more words to describe the immeasurable greatness of God’s power
    - “according to the working of his great might that he worked...”
    - Each of these Greek words is a synonym for power, might or strength
  - “Having mentioned the surpassing greatness of God’s power, Paul is now going to show that it is literally ‘according to the power of the power of his power.’ Paul lists a series of three words for power used to describe the standard of the surpassing greatness of God’s power.”<sup>1</sup>
  - Example: “By way of illustration, a bulldozer has the ability, capacity, and potential of routing out trees (δύναμις). By looking at it, one senses its inherent strength (ισχύς) but when its engine roars and it begins to move, its power of mastery becomes obvious (κράτος). However, when it comes to a tree and knocks it over one sees the activity of its power (ἐνέργεια).”<sup>2</sup>

#### A. The powerful resurrection of Christ

*20 that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead*

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<sup>1</sup> Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 269.

<sup>2</sup> Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 271.

- Perhaps in thinking about the display of God’s power, your mind may have immediately wandered to the countless displays of God’s power in the Old Testament
  - Creation, Worldwide flood, Parting the Red Sea, Obliterating armies that unfairly outnumbered His people–Israel, etc.
- Even so, there could not be a more obvious or vital display of God’s power than the resurrection of Jesus Christ
- Paul spoke of the resurrection as a display of God’s power multiple times
  - Romans 1:4 “and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord,”
  - Philippians 3:10 “that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death,”
- Obviously, to conquer death is to defy all human experience
  - How could one even begin to grasp the resurrection of Jesus in light of the basic course and events of life
  - Before Jesus, death had always been an enemy to which humanity had no strategy to face
  - The strategy was embrace death and know that your days are numbered
  - Thus, the resurrection is a most obvious display of God’s power
- Nonetheless, the resurrection of Christ is also a vital and necessary display of God’s power
  - Death is not simply the natural and normal experience for all of mankind
  - Death is the rightful payment and punishment for the sins of mankind
  - Mankind has been powerless to change their inevitable doom of death by living a sinless life
  - But when Christ defeated death in His resurrection, He sounded the war cry against death and its first cause–sin
  - Thus, the resurrection of Christ stands as God’s powerful act of breaking the curse of sin that had caused death to spread to all mankind
  - The resurrection is God flexing His muscles for all created beings so that we who believe in Christ might have hope and the demons opposed to Christ might shutter

B. The powerful recognition of Christ

*and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, 21 far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come.*

- We see several aspects of God’s power in the recognition of Christ

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- First, we see God’s power in Christ’s location
  - Christ is not in the grave and Christ is not stuck on earth
  - He has ascended to the heavenly places
  - He is at the right hand of God
    - Which angels have been so privileged to take up their location at the right hand of God—a most prestigious and authoritative position?
    - This location is only allotted for God’s Messiah according to the Old Testament
    - Psalm 110:1 “The LORD says to my Lord: ‘Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.’”
  - Additionally, Jesus is seated at the right hand of His Father
    - This is a reminder of the completion of the work He had accomplished on earth
    - When Jesus cried out, “It is finished,” He meant it
    - Sin was punished in His death and conquered in His resurrection
    - Hebrews 1:3 “He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high”
- Second, we see God’s power in Christ’s position or rank
  - Paul clearly states that Christ is “far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named”
  - Name any dominant earthly power or ruler, and Jesus is greater
  - Consider even the angelic and demonic powers that are at work in the heavens above and on the earth below—Jesus is greater
  - Jesus’ name stands alone above every other name
    - Philippians 2:9 “Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name,”
    - This is the reason we sing:  
*All hail the pow’r of Jesus’ Name!  
 Let angels prostrate fall;  
 Bring forth the royal diadem,  
 And crown Him Lord of all!*
- Third, we see God’s power in Christ’s eternal recognition
  - Christ is and forever will be recognized as Lord of all
  - Of course, human logic might lead one to reason, “Yes, but someone better always comes along and is overshadowed by the next great one.”

- Perhaps this is the case with professional athletes and military dynasties, but not with Jesus
- Paul plainly states that Jesus is, “above every name that is named, *not only in this age but also in the one to come.*”

### C. The powerful rule of Christ

*22 And he put all things under his feet*

- Not only does the position of Christ in the heavenlies display God’s power, but Paul adds by describing the dominance of Christ
- The picture of this dominance is seen in the phrase that “all things” are “under his feet”
  - In the ancient world, the placing of one’s foot upon the neck of another was a vivid picture of one’s dominance over another
  - “The metaphorical language ‘under his feet’ has the idea of victory over enemies. It is used of the winner of a duel who places his foot on the neck of his enemy who has been thrown to the ground, like Joshua who had his generals place their feet on the necks of the five defeated Amorite kings (Josh 10:24; cf. 2 Sam 22:39).”<sup>3</sup>
  - Paul paints this picture of Christ’s ruling dominance over his enemies
- The New Testament affirms this subjection
  - 1 Peter 3:22 “[Jesus Christ,] 22 who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him.”
- It might be helpful to address a concern that might be present in your mind
- That is, how has Christ subjected all things to Himself when it feels like there is still a lot of bad and evil at work in the world?
  - Even Ephesians 6:12 acknowledges the continued activity of evil forces in the spiritual realm
  - Ephesians 6:12 “For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.”
- The answer to such a question can simply be that Christ does in fact rule over all the forces of evil but He has chosen to delay the exercise of that authority and dominance until His return to earth when He will trample all His enemies

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<sup>3</sup> Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 283–284.

- “In reality Christ is at the right hand of the Father and everything has been subjected under his feet, but the full exercise of that power will not be evident until his return.”<sup>4</sup>
- This does not make Christ’s current rule meaningless because without Christ ruling, things would be far worse than what we are currently seeing and experiencing on earth
- However, let’s not neglect the obvious ways in which Christ is in fact ruling, even now
  - Namely, Christ is building His Church and there is no stopping Him
  - Matthew 16:18 “And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”

D. The powerful right of Christ

*and gave him as head over all things to the church, 23 which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.*

- “and gave him as head over all things to the church”
  - In light of this beautiful display of God’s power in the resurrection, exaltation, and dominion of Christ, Paul turns to show its immediate effect for our lives
  - Christ, who is the sovereign King over all creation, has been specifically given and designated the position of Head over the church
  - It is common sense that any company, team, or nation is only as good as its leadership
  - Think of the leadership that has been given to the Church!!!
    - Not the pastor, not the elders, not the deacons, not the staff, not the volunteers, not the financial resources, not the property size, not the number of congregants
    - If these were the means by which the church would either rise or fall in bringing glory to God, the church would collapse and fail miserably
  - But consider the true and God ordained leadership of His Church
  - It is His Son, Jesus Christ, the Head, the Lord over all, the King of kings
- “which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.”
  - Paul adds that we are Christ’s body
  - He specifies that we are Christ’s means of filling all things
  - Christ is filling all things through us

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<sup>4</sup> Harold W. Hoehner, Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 284.

- He is not only our Head and leader but He is the One working in and through us to accomplish His purposes