

Ephesians 1: 19-21; “His Exceeding Great Power”, Message # 7 in a series entitled – “The Exceeding Greatness of His Power”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on October 1st, 2023, in the Morning Worship Service.

This section of Paul’s letter to the church at Ephesus is his relating to them what he had been praying for, for them, ever since he had heard of their coming to faith in Jesus Christ. If those of us who are older in the faith want to see those who are younger in the faith grow up more quickly in Christ; if we want them to grow up strong in faith, and be able to exercise every grace to the glory of God, we must pray for them to understand the greatness of God’s power. That is, the greatness of His power to save us, and also to enable us to do God’s will. Understanding better God’s great power to save you, and to work in your heart, will help you to better know how you can glorify God with your life.

A mature Christian is like the apostle Paul. You will often be praying for other Christians around them to know God’s power so that they will catch a better vision of what God the Father is doing with Christ’s Church through His mighty power being exercised on their behalf. That is what these verses are describing. So at this time I want us to look 1st of all at – The Privileged People who God the Father exercises this great Power toward. And 2nd – We will look at the Exalted Person who God the Father exercises all this great power towards. I pray that we will learn together to consider the greatness of God’s power, and live and labor for Christ, by His power, to the glory of the Father.

1st of all – Let’s look at the Privileged People who God the Father exercises this great power toward.

Verse 19 says – “And what is the exceeding greatness of His power towards us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power.” The privileged people who God the Father exercises this great power toward, are specifically called here – “Us who believe”. It is not just any person or all persons in the world, towards whom God exercises His exceedingly great power. It is only towards those who are believing in God, and in His only-begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. What we need to understand is that there is an exceeding great power which is continually being exercised toward us who believe. From the creation of that faith within us, to the time of our being brought to eternal glory, this power is being exerted by the Father towards all who believe in Christ.

To begin living the Christian life you must look outside of yourself to be saved. You must not think that you have the strength or wisdom sufficient in yourself to be able to become a Christian, or to live the Christian life. But rather you must understand, that strength and that wisdom must be sought for from God Himself, in and through faith in Christ. O the greatness of the power that is given to those who will look to Christ, to become a new creature, and to live the Christian life! Great and mighty resurrection power is needed when you first come to Christ. You must be raised from your death in trespasses and sins.

But this great power, our text is telling us, must also be known by you every day in your living your life by faith in Him, in accordance with this power. One of the most important principles to be learned in living the Christian life, is to see that the power to live the Christian life is not from yourself but from God. Look at 2nd Corinthians 4: 5-7. “For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your bondservants for Jesus’ sake.” “For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” “But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us.”

Now, I want you to notice the way that Paul says this. He says – We do not preach ourselves. We are not those who believe that we need to preach up our own natural or inherent ability to believe or to repent. We don’t preach that we can live our Christian life in the power of our own strength or wisdom or ability. Yes, it true that when you are converted to Christ your will has been set free. And your will is now to do the will of Him who saved you. But still you must live by faith in the Son of God who loved you and gave himself for you. We have this treasure of Christ in earthen vessels that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us.

A true Christian ought to be able to look at themselves and to understand that the power to live the Christian life is not coming from them. It is not coming from your natural abilities, the strength of your intellect naturally, or any other thing that you might boast in, concerning yourself. There may be a number of things that you may think yourself to be very good at, or very strong in. But a Christian who is mature, he looks at himself as seeing the power as coming to him from God. And if he is wise, he affirms it at every point in his Christian experience.

He doesn't say – Now God has done this great thing for me in saving me through Christ. And so now I am going to do this or that great thing for Him. He doesn't think that way, if he is thinking biblically. Yes, I am sure that you know that you do need to take initiative. And, yes, you know that you need to be deliberate. And yes, you know that you do have a will, and that you need to choose to do certain things in obedience to God's word. But that is not the point of what we are talking about here. The point is, that the Christian life is never lived simply by the power of your own self-determination. Yes, you can make resolutions and you can be determined all you want to be, and you should be determined to do God's will at every point.

But now you are coming to understand the importance of thinking as the apostle Paul thought. You say to yourself – “I am determined to know nothing but Jesus Christ and Him crucified.” Why did Paul say that? He said it because he knew that it cost Christ going to the cross, to be able to purchase for him the power that he would receive from Him, to be able to live the Christian life. Why did he glory so much in the cross? And why do we need to glory in it so much? Why do we need to see and understand the words of Jesus where He said – “Without Me you can do nothing”? And that verse of Paul's which says – “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” Why? It is because of the surpassing greatness of the power!

We have this treasure in earthen vessels. In verse 6 it says that God has commanded light to shine out of darkness... Do you see how sovereignly this light comes to the sinner? God who has commanded light to shine out of darkness, has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ? Whoa, that is powerful stuff! It shows us that we have to have our mind illumined first, and then we have to be turned to behold the glory of Jesus Christ. Our will has to be turned to behold the glory of the Lord Jesus in His Person and His work. That takes power, the power of God, to turn us in this way.

That is why these things are so important for us to understand. It is not only in conversion that we need to understand these things but we also need them in order to live the Christian life. Galatians 2: 20 and 21 – “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.” “I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law; then Christ died in vain.” You can see this very clearly, can't you? I do not set aside the grace of God. He is talking about this in the context of Justification. But he is also talking about it in the context of living the Christian life; the life that he now lives in the flesh.

He is not talking about his indwelling remaining corruption – the flesh. He is talking about his body, and living for Christ while he has his physical life. The life that I now live in the body, the remainder of my life, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me. And I don't set aside the grace of God. In other words, that I somehow think that I am strong enough to do this on my own without His help, His teaching and His grace. Or that my relationship with Christ is not important to cultivate in terms of His power being given to me.

I think one of the grave errors of Christians nowadays is that they assume that since they have already received the Spirit that they are automatically going to grow up into Christ without seeking Him or without realizing greater measures of power in their life to live the Christian life. I think that it is a great error to think that you are going to automatically grow in living your Christian life. Think about what it says in Chapter 3, verses 1-7 – “O foolish Galatians!” “Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified?” “This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of

faith?” “Are you so foolish?” “Having begun in the Spirit are you now being made perfect by the flesh? “Have you suffered so many things in vain – if indeed it was in vain?” “Therefore He who supplies the Spirit to you and work miracles among you, does He do it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith!” – just as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.” “Therefore know that only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham.”

Paul begins here by saying that they were foolish Galatians. And he says – Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified? Now notice how he turns them right back to Christ and Him crucified? Because what they were trying to do was that they were trying to add something to Christ; either circumcision or the works of the Law. And whenever the works of the law are mentioned they are mentioned in the context of a person’s being able to do and keep the law on their own, and by their own strength, supposedly. They are able to do that supposedly.

But in Romans chapter 4 it says that by the works of the law, no man shall be justified. But here, Paul is talking about why they are foolish as professed believers. And he begins by saying – How did you receive the Spirit? Was it by the works of the Law? Or was it by the hearing of faith? Well, this is the importance of faith, isn’t it? It is by the hearing with faith. That’s what he is saying, and so he is saying to them – Have you suffered so many things in vain? If indeed it was in vain. In other words, probably persecution which was coming to them. Or people looking down on them because they wouldn’t hold to the law in order to be justified.

They thought that they could be Jews who could know God and walk with God by trying to keep the works of law. They did not want to have to think that they had to continually look to someone outside of themselves, even to the Lord Jesus Christ in order to live the Christian life. So, you see, they were very confused people. And so he goes on to tell them – Therefore He who supplies the Spirit to you. Notice the terminology here – He who supplies the Spirit to you, which involves a regular on-going supply of grace by the Spirit. And He who worked miracles among you. Does He do this by the works of the law, or by the hearing by faith? And of course it was by the hearing of faith.

So let us take this a step farther. Abraham believed God, and he was justified. And even so, it was accounted to him for righteousness. And only those who are of faith are the sons of Abraham, and are blessed with believing Abraham when they believe the gospel. But it is also true that there is a continual blessing to the believer of their knowing the exceeding greatness of the power of Christ through the ongoing work of the Spirit in their mind and heart, in the sense of Sanctification. There is the supply of the Spirit which is given to you all through your living your Christian life. Indeed, it is God’s exceeding great power which upholds your life of faith in God and in Christ. Galatians 2: 20 – “The life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me.”

Let us understand that our whole walk with Christ, and our obedience to God, is done by faith in Christ who gives us the power to do what is right. We are blessed in this powerful way to be able to live the whole Christian life by faith in the Son of God. It is God’s exceeding great power which upholds your life of faith in Him, and your walking uprightly before Him. You do this by the power of Christ. The life you now live in the flesh, you live by faith in the Son of God who loved you and gave Himself for you in relation to your growing in righteousness and holiness.

2nd – The Exalted Person who God the Father exercises all this great power for.

Verses 19-21 – “And what is the exceeding greatness of the power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He worked in Christ when He raised him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is name, not only in this age but also in that which is to come.” So the exalted Person who God the Father exercises all of this great power for, is our Lord Jesus Christ. In other words, it is because of Christ’s having accomplished redemption, having satisfied the Father’s justice concerning all of His elect people, that He exercises this exceeding great power towards us who believe.

It was the Father's mighty power which was there to confirm the fact that since our redemption was accomplished, it would now all be applied in all of the blessings and benefits of our salvation. This working in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and seated Him in the heavenly places at His right hand, was the display of His purpose. He was fully satisfied with Christ's finished work. His express purpose then became, to greatly honor and exalt His Son. His raising Christ, from the dead, and His having Him seated there in the very highest of positions, at His right hand, fulfills His purpose in relation to us who believe, in particular. It also fulfills His purpose in relation to all mankind in general, as well, in His willingness that all men should believe the gospel. The Father exalted His Son in this mighty way so that He would exercise His authority in His ruling over all men, and all angels, and all the nations of the world.

He would place His Son there, at His right hand. He would seat Him there for this whole Church age. And the Lord Jesus will stay there at His right hand, until the Father sends Him back again in His Second Coming, to judge the world. At that time He will punish the wicked, and He will reward the righteous. It is good for us to think about Christ's exaltation by the Father to this highest of positions. For it allows us see that everything related to our salvation will most certainly come to pass in due time. There is nothing, and no one, who is greater than Christ in His rule. He is described as being in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age, but also that which is to come.

All of this has come to pass as a result of the Father's rewarding Him for His perfect obedience to His law, and His willingness to go to the cross to die there for our sins. Philippians 2: 9 – "Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, 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, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father." My brethren, in response to all that the Father has done in exalting His Son, we ought to seek to obey Him, that He might be glorified in us in everything we do and say.

As it says in Philippians 2: 12 and 13 – "Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure." It is important that each of us understands that even though Christ is exalted, we are yet here upon the earth. He would have you to work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. Each of us has much to learn in this regard. And we will learn it if we will remember that it is God who works in us, both to will and to do according to His good pleasure. When He works in, we will be able to work out, our own salvation. He would have each of us come to understand many things about His exceedingly great power toward us in relation to our infirmities, our weaknesses, and the many difficult and distressing providences that He will permit or bring us into.

Think also of Paul's words in 2nd Corinthians 12, verses 6-10 – "For though I might desire to boast, I will not be a fool; for I will speak the truth." "But I refrain, lest anyone should think of me above what he sees me to be or hears from me." "And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure." "Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me." "And He said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.'" "Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me."

It is in these kinds of situations that you will prove how exalted a personage Christ really is, when you come to understand that His grace is sufficient for you, and His power is being perfected in your weakness. His power towards you will be so very great that you will eventually learn to be content with these things, and you will even take pleasure in those things, for His sake. And truly, you will learn to prove the greatness of His power toward you, the one believing in Him, in every situation that you find yourself in. May this be the case with each one here today.

