

Ephesians 1:19-23 "We Have Access To The God Who Has All Power And Authority"

**Ephesians 1:18-23** <sup>18</sup> *I pray that* the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, <sup>19</sup> and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. *These are* in accordance with the working of the strength of His might <sup>20</sup> which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly *places*, <sup>21</sup> far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. <sup>22</sup> And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, <sup>23</sup> which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

Paul has been encouraging these Christians in Ephesus, as he's come along-side them in this letter, to show them how awesome God's grace is; this grace which He freely bestowed on us in the beloved (Jesus Christ), as he put it in verse 6.

He reminds them of how this grace manifest itself toward us when he said in verse 7, "In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the His riches of His grace which He lavished upon us..."

Paul is caught up in the majesty of Christ and His love toward us and he's trying to encourage these people, as well as us, "...to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge - that [they] may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God." (EPH 3:18-19)

It's not enough for Paul to simply realize that we've been forgiven of our sin in Christ. He's not content to just take a gift from God and go along his merry way. He realizes that this gift is also a commitment to use that gift and glory in that gift as we seek to now serve our new Master and Lord out of thanks and gratitude.

And so essentially, he's saying, let's appreciate what we have and demonstrate it here and now in a way that makes a difference for our Lord, because this is exactly what He wants to do in our lives; make a difference in our world as we give this world the truth and we walk in this truth in the power of the Holy Spirit.

And this is why he said in verse 12, that "...to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ should be to the praise of His glory."

Paul's prayer for these people, and all the Church, is what we saw in verse 18.

EPH 1:18 I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints,

Again, it's not as though Paul didn't think that they didn't have an understanding of their salvation, or that they weren't appreciative. He just wanted them to never stop appreciating and growing in this relationship.

It would very easy to cruise home to be with the Lord. It would be very easy to think, 'I'm in and I don't want to work any harder than I absolutely have to'. Paul is urging these people and us to take a long hard look at the face of our Savior and meditate on this great gift of salvation and to arrive at the only conclusion, which is to humble ourselves in worship and adoration.

But he wants that worship and adoration to demonstrate itself in lives of consecration, commitment, loyalty and appreciation in a way where we seize every opportunity to serve and love our Lord in this world.

This is why Paul told the Colossian Church in COL 4:2-6 "Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. 3 And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. 4 Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should. 5 Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. 6 Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone."

Make the most of every opportunity. The only way we can do that is to be aware of what's going on around us as we take the attitude that we want to be used of God. That doesn't just mean that we wait for God to dump someone in our laps. It means that we actively pursue any avenue which could possibly open such a door, and as we are wise in the way we act toward outsiders or unbelievers.

The converse of that statement is also true. If we are acting in an unwise way, the unbeliever will not be open to our message.

Acting in a wise way, is to act in the love of Christ; it's to be open to meet people where they are and not take an attitude of condemnation which is what we see so often in the world today.

By and large, the unbeliever is looking for answers in life. They want to know what this life is all about. They want to approach life with some sort of hope. Their problem is that they think the answer is found in this world, with the material things of this world.

Our job, as believers, is to show them that the answer is found in Christ, whose Kingdom is not of this world, but whose Kingdom is everlasting. And as we are willing to share the truth the Holy Spirit will be faithful to touch hearts and open their eyes to this truth. But we need to be willing to step out in faith and in boldness to give them the truth.

And this is exactly what Paul is saying in our text when he says, EPH 1:18-20 "I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, 19 and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, 20 which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms,..."

You see, we are not left to our own power when it comes to living this life in Christ. We are not left to our own power when it comes to sharing our faith or being the witness for Christ in this world.

Paul wants us to understand the power of God who is working in our lives. Verses 19 through the end of this chapter are power verses, if you will, and they are designed to show us that we serve a God who can and will move heaven and earth, to accomplish His will in us and those around us.

We have a number of words here in our text that speak of this power. In verse 19 Paul says, "his incomparably great power for us who believe." This word power in the Greek is *dunamis* {doo'-nam-is}, and it's where we get our English word dynamite. This is a power which is full of strength from an eternal Almighty source who is God Himself.

In fact, Paul identifies this power in verse 19 and 20 when he says, "...That power is like the working of his mighty strength, which he

exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms,..."

What kind of power is that? The greatest power in the universe. A power that only God possesses. No angel, no person, not even Satan possesses a power that even comes close to the power of God.

By the way, Paul is setting the stage here to show us that this same power is the power God is working in us, as we submit to Him, so that we can go out in this world and do battle for Him.

Most of us are familiar with the sixth chapter of Ephesians, but it's here in the first chapter that Paul is helping us to see where this power for our life in Christ comes from. But, this power is something we rely on by faith to be used in this world even though the forces we come against are not of this world. This is precisely why we need a spiritual power which is far above all others.

That's why Paul says in EPH 6:10-11 "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. 11 Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes."

How are we to actually be strong in the Lord and His mighty power? That's the question. And Paul answers it in this first chapter. Again, let me draw your attention back to our text.

EPH 1:18-19 "I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, **[in order that you may see]** the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, 19 **[in order that you may see]** his incomparably great power for us who believe..."

There seems to be a connection to seeing with spiritual eyes what we already possess in Christ, which in this case is the power which comes from Him, to demonstrate to the world that we do belong to Him and to fight the good fight of faith in His strength.

It's kind of like what Elisha told his servant when they went out to do battle against the king of Aram, or Syria, according to some translations. The Lord had been giving Elisha information about the Kings' plan to come against Israel. Every time the King went out to do battle Israel was ready for them.

We read in 2KI 6:11-13 "This enraged the king of Aram. He summoned his officers and demanded of them, "Will you not tell me which of us is on the side of the king of Israel?" 12 "None of

us, my lord the king," said one of his officers, "but Elisha, the prophet who is in Israel, tells the king of Israel the very words you speak in your bedroom." 13 "Go, find out where he is," the king ordered, "so I can send men and capture him." The report came back: "He is in Dothan."

Well, you can imagine how the King reacted. He ends up sending a considerable force down to Dothan to make sure that he captures Elisha. He's not going to mess around with a small force, he's going to go down in great force.

We read in 2KI 6:14-16 "Then he sent horses and chariots and a strong force there. They went by night and surrounded the city. 15 When the servant of the man of God got up and went out early the next morning, an army with horses and chariots had surrounded the city. "Oh, my lord, what shall we do?" the servant asked. 16 "Don't be afraid," the prophet answered. "Those who are with us are more than those who are with them."

Now I would be saying at this point, "excuse me, Elisha, I really appreciate your optimistic attitude, but we're about to be overrun here and you're telling me that those who are with us are more than those who are with them. Are you hallucinating?"

No, Elisha was not hallucinating. Like Paul, he was going to pray that the eyes of his servant's heart may be enlightened in order that he may know God's incomparably great power for us who believe.

We read in 2KI 6:17-18 "And Elisha prayed, "O LORD, open his eyes so he may see." Then the LORD opened the servant's eyes, and he looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha. 18 As the enemy came down toward him, Elisha prayed to the LORD, "Strike these people with blindness." So he struck them with blindness, as Elisha had asked."

What Paul is saying to us is that we need to walk by faith in this world to where our eyes are open to not only the power of God but what He desires do with our lives as we go forward in His name. The only difference between what the servant of Elisha perceived about his condition before this vast army, both before and after what he saw, was God opening his eyes to what was already there.

The army of the Lord was already in place as they were camped on the hills with their horses and chariots. These were not pretend horses and chariots but real horses and chariots, albeit heavenly

horses and chariots, presumably manned by angels, who were about to do battle for God and Elisha.

It would be very easy to look at this city of Port Charlotte and conclude that the enemy has a strong hold here and that there seems to be no way of breaking through his ranks. God is telling us to look to the Lord and to know that only He is able to open our eyes in a way to see his incomparably great power which He wants to use in and through us to tear down such strongholds.

But along with this power comes the responsibility to go out to meet the enemy. Only on the battle field can we do battle. And the battle field are the hearts of the lost who do not have eyes to see or ears to hear because of the power of sin in their lives.

The only thing that can break through is the power of God as He chooses to use us as we take the fight to those who are being held hostage. It's not as though we don't already possess this power in Christ. But we have a tendency not go forward because we feel intimidated thinking that there's no way I can do battle under the circumstances. And the circumstance we look at is our own inability to fight this spiritual battle.

Elisha's servant didn't realize that this very real and physical army was really a spiritual battle that God was in the midst in with His power. The mighty angels were already surrounding the Syrian army long before this servant saw them.

Elisha simply prayed that this servant would see the reality of this army so that his heart would not faint and that he would go forward in the strength of the Lord. Who wouldn't go forward when you could see such a display of power?

David understood the power of God and yet he understood that he must accept this power by faith. He had seen Him work in the past and he knew God's strength was with him in the present which is why he could say in PSA 46:7 "The LORD Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress. Selah"

Now you and I might be thinking, 'well, if I could see God's working in my life and in the life of others as He did in the case of David and Israel I might be more prone to trust God.'

Let me ask you, have you not in fact already seen the mighty and miraculous hand of God? Did He not turn your heart of stone into a heart of flesh which He is molding and shaping and conforming into the image of Christ?

Has He not taken us from the darkness of sin and a sure condemnation, and brought us into the light of His Son where we have life and hope and an inheritance in Christ? Has He not done a miraculous work in our hearts and delivered us out of the hand of the enemy to where Satan is no longer our master?

What more does God have to do to open our eyes to see His mighty power working in and through us? But, so as not to limit this power to our own experience Paul makes it quite clear what kind of power we are talking about.

He says at the end of verse 19, ... "That power is like the working of his mighty strength, 20 which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms,..."

You mean to tell me that we have the same power working in us that was working when Christ was raised in power? You bet. In fact this power from our Almighty God is the same infinite power which also created the entire universe.

2CO 4:6-9 "For God, who said, "**Let light shine out of darkness,**" made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ. 7 But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. 8 We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; 9 persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed."

Paul understands that this world and its influences and its curse are everywhere trying to drag us down, (we who are soldiers of Christ), and keep us from being servants of the Most High God. But, he encourages us to keep going forward, and by faith, seeing with the kind of eyes that trust that God is working in us with His power to overcome this world, knowing that "our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness and against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places."

But unless we are willing to see this spiritual struggle we will not see the spiritual solution. If we only see as far as the present trial then we will never have the eyes to see that God's power far exceeds anything that the enemy would use to hamstring us and to keep us out of the battle for the hearts of the lost.

That's what this is really all about. Have you ever thought why Satan spends so much time coming against God's people? Is it simply to harass us and be a pain in our rear ends so that he can jump up and down with joy and say, 'oh look, I've got them chasing their tails again.'

No, he would like us to think that. He would like us to think that we're simply being the recipients of spiritual warfare and that now we must spend all of our efforts coming against him as we spend all of our waking hours trying to figure out how to get out of this spiritual attack.

No, he's not interested in simply giving you a hard time for the sake of hassling you. His goal is to bring dishonor to the God who judged him and cast him out of God's presence. And if he can sidetrack us from being effective servants; being able to bring this life giving message of Christ to the world, then he'll let us think whatever we want about the situation.

The moment we concentrate on the enemy to the degree that we are overwhelmed by his power, we lose sight of the power of God who tells us to go forward. We become crippled and useless in the Kingdom; the same Kingdom we claim as belonging to precisely by the power of God who raised Christ from the dead.

How great is our God? How powerful is His might which He shares with everyone one of His children? Who is this God who gives us life and can be trusted to not only give us eternal life, but who is also there with all might and power to enable us to be His servants who need not fear the enemy?

Well, Paul continues to give us some insight into this as well in our text. When God demonstrated this Almighty power to raise Christ from the dead we see the outcome of this resurrection of our Lord and Savior.

**Ephesians 1:20-22** .... He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly *places*, <sup>21</sup> far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. <sup>22</sup> And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church...

The same God who condemned Satan and stripped him of his majesty in the heavenly realms, brought up from the dead and

seated Christ far above any rule any angel or even Satan might have.

Let's look at this for a moment. Where is Christ seated? He is seated, according to verse 20, at the right hand of the Father in the heavenly realms. Is this a metaphor for Christ's rule and reign with the Father? No, our physically resurrected Savior is presently and literally with the Father and His people and is literally ruling and reigning over us with all power.

Like Elisha's servant, simply because we cannot presently see this reality with our physical eyes does not make it so. In fact, Stephen was given a glimpse of this reality of Christ's present position with the Father just before he went home to be with Christ, who is at the Father's right hand.

ACT 7:55-56 "But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. 56 "Look," he said, "I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God."

We see this rule and reign of Christ in other passages of God's word.

PSA 8:6 "You made him ruler over the works of your hands; you put everything under his feet:..."

This is further seen in our text in EPH 1:22-23 "And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, 23 which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way."

Jesus Christ stands above all rulers and authorities and He is the head of the Church. No one, including Satan, has dominion over us or the Church of Jesus Christ. Our Lord and Savior is the Almighty God who has all rule and dominion.

What this should do for us is to encourage us. It should encourage us to know that being His children, He has no intention of letting us slip through the cracks. He is always there for us, to empower us, to strengthen us, to build us up in our most holy faith.

We need not fear the battles which we encounter in this life, because God is for us and if He is for us who can be against us? We don't need to be crippled by anything that would take our eyes

off of Christ and place them on any situation, no matter how powerful the temptation might be to cause us to cower in despair.

We serve the living Almighty God who saved us from the penalty and the power of sin. All power and authority has been given to Christ and as His children we are in Him, and He in us.

The other thing this truth should do for us to encourage us that our heavenly home is sure and we can know that this hope has been secured in Christ who is above all things. We can live in that assurance and move forward in that assurance everyday as we love and serve our God, not having to be beat down by life or the trials we face in this life.

The mighty power of God who raised Christ from the dead is at work in our lives, but unless we truly understand that power by faith, and walk in it, we will always be a target for the enemy who wants to keep us in a constant state of doubt and confusion, which produces anemic Christians; people who would rather be on the sidelines than actively involved in the battle of doing the work of God.

We belong to Christ, and Jesus has loved each one of us enough to die for us and purchase us for His own possession so that we may spend eternity in fellowship with Him.

What Paul wants these Ephesian Christians and us to understand is this, COL 2:9-13 "For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, 10 and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority. 11 In him you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Christ, 12 having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead. 13 When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ."

It is this resurrection life we are to be living in by faith. We are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. As Paul says, "For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Rom.8:37-39)

How then could we ever say, "I don't have what I need to go forward with my God?" He has given us all things in Christ to stand firm as He has sealed us with His Spirit, who empowers us for the glorious work He has for us today.

There is no power in the universe which can thwart the work of God and there is no power we should fear. The work God has called us to is a work which is empowered by God and He gives us the weapons for this warfare which are spiritual in nature.

One of those weapons is the Gospel of peace. That's why Paul could encourage us with these words in ROM 1:16-17 "I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. 17 For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith."

It was the power of God in the gospel which brought us into the Kingdom and it is the power of God that keeps us and enables us to take this weapon of peace to the world that they too may know the life we can have in Christ, who rules and reigns and has a place for us in His Kingdom.

Let's honor Him by walking with spiritual eyes wide open, and let's stand in awe of what God is doing and will do through us as we trust that the battle belongs to the Lord. We have nothing to fear as we walk with the Creator who has given us life eternal. There's work that needs to be done and we have been equipped by our God to do it. Let's go forth in faith in His power to His glory.