

Wednesday Night BIBLE STUDY

Wednesday, February 26, 2025 – First Baptist Church Buda
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study

T H E B O O K O F

EPHESIANS

How to live the Christian life

EPHESIANS: HOW TO LIVE THE CHRISTIAN LIFE – PART 6
“God Mighty Power” - Ephesians 1:19-23

“¹⁹And what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power ²⁰which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, ²¹far 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. ²²And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, ²³which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.” – Ephesians 1:19-23 (NKJV)

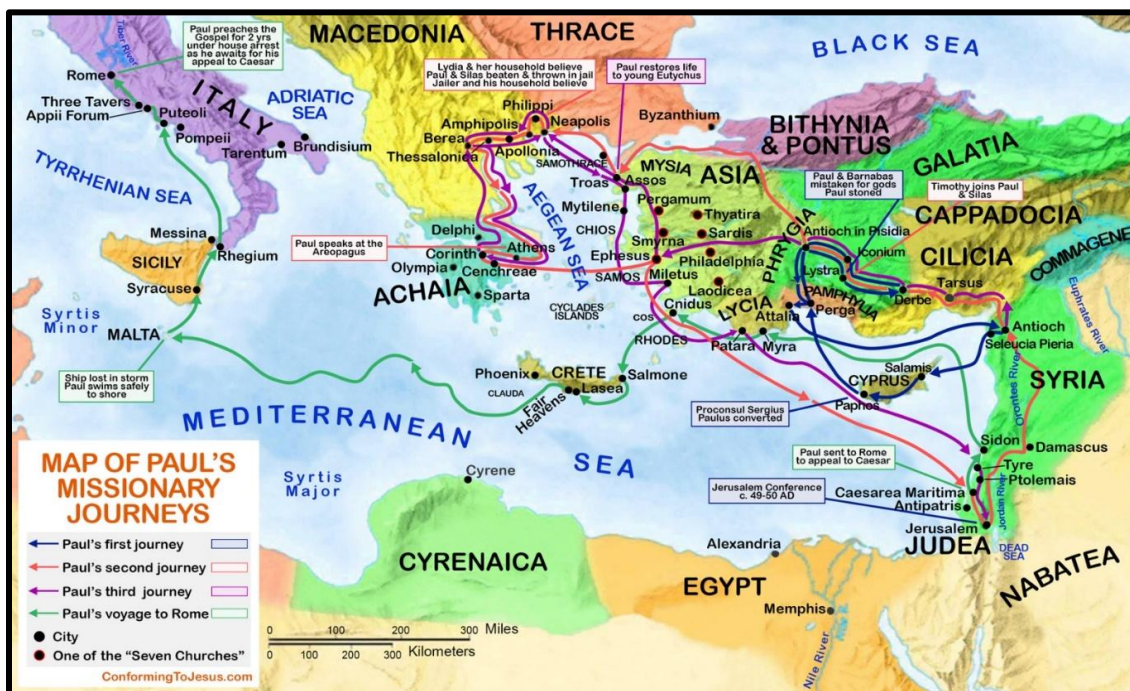
If you could buy a book that contained a concentration of a lifetime of thinking and experience on spiritual matters by one of the greatest Christian leaders of all time, would you do it? Would you read it and study it and try to plumb the depths of its wisdom? What about if you could read aloud all six chapters of the book in only 19 minutes? I’m speaking about Paul’s letter to the Ephesians.

- Even though Ephesians is so short, **Martyn Lloyd-Jones**’ exposition of it takes eight volumes! He has 37 messages on chapter 1 alone!
- **John Calvin**’s 48 sermons on Ephesians take up 705 pages.
- The **Puritan William Gurnall** in *The Christian in Complete Armor* takes almost 1,200 pages to expound on Ephesians 6:10-20!

So there is far more depth in this short epistle than I can begin to understand or apply to my own life, much less to expound on. So as we come to it, we must pray with the apostle Paul (Ephesians 1:17-19), ... *“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.”

- The English poet, Samuel Coleridge, said that “Ephesians is the divinest composition of man.”
- Another writer refers to it as, “Ephesians is the Grand Canyon of Scripture, because it is breathtakingly beautiful and apparently inexhaustible to the one who wants to take it in” (cited by, James Boice, *Ephesians* [Baker], p. 1).
- Martyn Lloyd-Jones calls Ephesians “Ephesians is the sublimest and the most majestic expression of the gospel.” (*God’s Ultimate Purpose* [Baker], p. 12).



KEY BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR EPHESIANS

To gain a better understanding of the Book of Ephesians, consider the following background information:

1. **Authorship: The Apostle Paul** - Traditionally attributed to the Apostle Paul.
2. **Date of Writing: A.D. 60-63** - Likely written around A.D. 60-63 during Paul's Roman imprisonment.
3. **Place of writing: Rome** – Paul wrote the book/letter of Ephesians from a Roman prison
4. **Audience: Ephesian Christians at Ephesus and surrounding area** Addressed to the Christian community in Ephesus, a major city in Asia Minor. Ephesians is considered a “circular letter” meant to be circulated to church in the area of Ephesus... possibly the same 7 churches

5. **Purpose:** How to live the Christian life To strengthen the faith of believers and address issues of unity and spiritual maturity.
 6. **Themes:** Grace, the church, and holy living - Key themes include grace, the church as the body of Christ, and the importance of living a holy life.
 7. **Structure:** Ephesus is divided into two main sections - Divided into two main sections: doctrinal teachings (chapters 1-3) and practical applications (chapters 4-6).
 8. **Cultural Context:** Ephesus was center of commerce and religion - Ephesus was a center of commerce and religion, known for the Temple of Artemis.
 9. **Significance:** Mystery of the gospel and inclusion of Gentiles - Emphasizes the mystery of the Gospel and the inclusion of Gentiles in God's plan.
 10. **Spiritual Warfare:** Ephesians' emphasis on the spiritual battle Concludes with a call to spiritual readiness and the armor of God (chapter 6).
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Application Questions

1. **What are some evidences that you have experienced God's mighty power in salvation? What signs should raise some doubts about this?**
2. **How would you counsel a person who was living a very worldly life, but who said, "I'm going to heaven because I believe in Jesus"? Should you give him assurance of salvation?**
3. **Which is a more certain evidence of God's saving power: Performing miracles or a godly life (see Matt. 7:21-23)?**
4. **Can demons plague true Christians? If so, to what extent? (Consider 2 Cor. 12:7-9; Luke 13:11-16; 1 Cor. 5:5.)**

"¹⁹And what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power ²⁰which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, ²¹far 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. ²²And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, ²³which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all." – Ephesians 1:19-23 (NKJV)

I begin by admitting that our text creates some problems for me. While there is an interpretive problem, 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**
- That's the problem... Christians, clearly have been given the very power of God that dwells in them, and Paul's words in our passage remind us that he wants us to know

“¹⁹And what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power.” (Ephesians 1:19) Do you know you have the very power of God in your as a Christians?

Listen to the following verses/passages as they are read. What does each verse say about power?

- **Psalm 68:35** – *“Oh God, You are more awesome than Your holy places. The God of Israel is He who give strength and power to His people.”*
- **Isaiah 40:29** – *“He (God) gives power to the weak, and to those who have not might He increases strength.”*
- **Matthew 10:1** – *“And when He had called His twelve disciples to Him, He gave them power over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease.”*
- **Luke 9:1** – *“Then He called His twelve disciples together and gave them power and authority over all demons, and to cure diseases.”*
- **Acts 1:8** – *“But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”*
- **2 Corinthians 12:9** – *“⁹ 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.”*
- **Ephesians 3:20** – *“²⁰ Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us.”*
- **2 Timothy 1:7** – *“⁷ For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.”*

Again, the problem... Christians, clearly have been given the very power of God that dwells in them, and Paul’s words in our passage remind us that he wants us to know *“¹⁹And what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power.”* (Ephesians 1:19)

- So why do we so often live such powerless lives as Christians?
- Why, if we have been given the very power of God, are we so often defeated by the world the flesh and the devil?
- Why do we live so beneath the power of God?

Do you know you have the very power of God in your as a Christians? Those who become Christians by faith in Christ soon discover that being born again does not automatically solve all their spiritual problems. Satan, who has done everything he can to keep a person from becoming a Christian, now changes his tactics to keeping a Christian from living their lives in the power of God, exercising the power of God, living in the power of God... achieving a real testimony for Christ.

3 Reasons Christians Fail to Live Powerful Christian Lives:

- (1) **The world's influence** - The Christian is faced with a world system that is contrary to serving the Lord. The world's standards, its values, its immorality, and its materialism constitute a formidable opposition to a Christian who wants to serve the Lord effectively.
- (2) **The enemies subtle schemes** - Satan also will do all he can to keep a Christian from fulfilling God's plan for his life. Christians, accordingly, are exhorted to "be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings" (1 Peter 5:8-9).
- (3) **Our own sin** - In addition to satanic opposition, which can be very real in a Christian's life, we still have a sin nature. Even though we are born again and have a new nature in Christ, the sin nature resists the desires and goals of the new nature. What we were before we were saved tends to draw us back into the old life, which does not honor Christ. This is not a peculiar problem for some Christians; it is a problem for all Christians. **(READ: Romans 7:18-20, 24-25)** The apostle Paul speaks of this when he states, *"I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it"* (Rom. 7:18-20). After further discussion of this problem, Paul concludes *"What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!"* (Rom. 7:24-25).

The answer to this inadequacy of human beings to solve their own problems, even after they are saved, is found in **God's provision for power over sin and the power to have victory in**

That's the problem. 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. Many 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?"

Some will say that God's mighty power should be seen by frequent miracles of healing or by speaking in tongues or by words of supernatural knowledge or prophecy. But, all too often, those making such claims are guilty of living just as the world lives. When their immorality and worldly lifestyles become known, the world mocks and the gospel is discredited.

So the question is...

3 Questions to Consider:

- (1) How can we reconcile what Paul says here about God's mighty power toward us who believe with what we see all around us?**
- (2) What do these words mean and how do they apply to us?**
- (3) 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. So we must continually ask Him for understanding.

Also, as Paul makes clear in Philippians 3, this is a lifelong process. He states there that his aim is (Philippians 3:10) "*that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection....*" But, then he adds (Philippians 3:12), "*Not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus.*" Paul wrote those words about 25 years into his Christian experience. So the process of coming to know Christ's resurrection power is one that we should be growing in until we meet the Lord.

With that as a context, in our text Paul is saying that...

KEY THOUGHT: *God wants us to understand the magnitude of His mighty power that saved us and exalted Christ over all, so that we will properly represent Him on earth.*

Again our passage in Ephesians 1:19-23 says, "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.*"

3 Things Paul Tells Us Concerning God's Power:

- (1) God's mighty power that saves us is the same power that raised Christ from the dead (Ephesians 1:19-20)**
- (2) God's mighty power seated Christ at His right hand, far above all spiritual powers (Ephesians 1:20-21)**
- (3) God's mighty power put all things in subjection to Christ and gave Him as head over all things to the church (Ephesians 1:22)**

GOD'S MIGHTY POWER THAT SAVED US IS THE SAME POWER THAT RAISED CHRIST FROM THE DEAD (Ephesians 1:19-20a)

Notice **verses 19 and 20** again... Paul writes, ***“¹⁹And 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.”*** The Greek text is literally, ***“according to...”*** and refers back, not to all three things that God wants us to know, but only to the third one, ***“the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe.”*** So if you want to break up the sentence, a better translation would be, ***“This is in accordance with...”*** In other words, Paul prays that we would know the surpassing power of God that saved us, which is in accordance with the same power that raised Christ from the dead.

The mightiest power ever unleashed on this earth was not the power of the atomic bombs dropped on Japan. It was not the power of an earthquake, volcano, tornado, hurricane, or flood. ***The mightiest power ever unleashed on this earth was when God raised Jesus Christ from the dead.*** Satan and all of his evil forces were aligned in full battle force when Jesus lay in the tomb. If he could have kept Jesus from rising from the dead, Satan would have been triumphant. And so Paul piles up words to make the point that God's power in raising Jesus from the dead was the mightiest display of power ever known.

Paul not only refers to God's *power*, which would seem to be sufficient (since He is omnipotent!). He adds, ***“the greatness of His power,”*** and then tops that by adding, ***“the surpassing greatness of His power.”***

Power is the Greek word ***dynamis***, from which we get our word, dynamite. It is often used of miraculous power. But Paul goes further, stating that this power is ***“in accordance with the working of the strength of His might.”*** We get our word “energy” from the Greek word translated *working*. Paul uses it in Ephesians 1:11 to refer to God's working all things after the counsel of His will. It refers to the exercise of His power, or to action that gets results. It accomplishes what it sets out to do. *Strength* may also be translated “dominion” (1 Tim. 6:16) or “power” (Heb. 2:14). *Might* refers to inherent strength.

TEN THING YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT GOD'S POWER (IN YOU):

- (1) God's power, the sort of power that dwells within every born-again believer and energizes his/her life and ministry is not the sort of “thing” that you can touch or contain in a bottle - It is the very energy of the life of God himself. *It is the supernatural energy that emanates from God's being.***
- (2) This supernatural and divine power quite literally fills and indwells the bodies and souls of every born-again believer - God does not call upon us to speculate about the nature of this power. He does not want us to envision it merely as an idea. His desire is**

that we avail ourselves of it to partner with him in his purposes on the earth. His desire is that we cry out to him that he might intensify and expand and increase and deepen the manifestation of this power through us in ever more demonstrative and tangible ways in our lives.

- (3) **In Philippians 3:8-11 Paul speaks of his urgent desire to know Christ “and the power of his resurrection” – (READ: Philippians 3:8-11)** He isn’t asking God for more theoretical knowledge about the resurrection of Jesus or the powerful means by which he was brought back to life. He isn’t saying, “Lord, I need to know how you pulled it off.” He isn’t asking that he be provided with more arguments to prove to unbelievers that Jesus came back to life. He is asking God that he might personally experience the very supernatural power that was exerted by the Holy Spirit that prevented the decomposition of the body of Jesus, the supernatural energy that restored life to a corpse, the supernatural energy that overcame and reversed the entropy and decay to which the body of Jesus would otherwise be subjected.
- (4) **The power that indwells every born-again believer is the same power that raised Jesus from the dead and exalted him to the right hand of the Father** - This very power that raised Jesus from the dead abides and dwells in you right now precisely so that you might *transcend the limitations of your finite existence* and perform supernatural deeds like those performed by Jesus? On what basis do I say this? In his prayer in Ephesians 1:17-21 Paul prays that we might know *“what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might that 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 rule and authority and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come.”* It isn’t merely “power” that he has in view. It is God’s power. But look at how he describes God’s power. It is the “greatness” of this power that occupies his attention. No, no, there is more. It is the “immeasurable” greatness of his power, which is to say that this power is without limit. It is infinite. It never falls short of accomplishing what God has designed for it. And if that were not enough, this immeasurably great power that lives and abides and pulsates inside the soul of the believer, this power that raised Jesus from the dead, did so as an expression of the “working of his great might.” Paul reiterates this point in his prayer in Ephesians 3, where he asks that God would “grant you [and me] to be strengthened with power [not merely with ideas or exhortations or steroid injections; no, with supernatural energy] through his Spirit in your inner being” (3:16). Observe closely where this power abides and operates. It is in “your inner being” that the Spirit operates in this powerful manner. And if that isn’t enough to convince you, Paul concludes this prayer with these famous but all-too-often neglected words: *“Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power [written about in theology textbooks; well, no; talked about at Christian conferences; well, no; this power is] at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Jesus Christ through all generations, forever and ever, Amen”* (Eph. 3:20-21). Again I ask, where is it that God does all such things? Through what means? It is by means of or in accordance with

his supernatural power. Yes, but *where* does this supernatural power reside? Where does it do its work? Paul says it is “within us”! It is inside and through Christians like you and me.

- (5) **Consider the words of Peter... “His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence” (2 Peter 1:3)** - Whatever deficiency you may experience in your Christian “life” and your pursuit of “godliness” can be overcome and richly and abundantly supplied to you through God’s power.
- (6) **The power of God is essential for every facet of Christian living** - When Paul explained to the Colossian Christians how he managed to persevere in his ministry, this is how he said it in Colossians 1:29, “*For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me.*” God infuses his very own supernatural energy into his servants. This energy, says Paul, works “within” us powerfully. Could it possibly be that the reason so many pastors “burn out” in ministry is because they are toiling and struggling with no more than the human energy that they can muster based on their education and intellect and personal skills? The “energy” that God “powerfully works within” you is limitless and endlessly abundant. What might our ministries and churches and personal lives look like if we consciously embraced and availed ourselves of this divine and supernatural energy? Experiencing the power of God the Holy Spirit is not an exceptional, rare, or sporadic phenomenon but is intended by God to be the routine, ordinary, daily reality in the life of every believer, regardless of their education, social standing, financial status, or role in the church. This power isn’t merely available to you this week or next year. God intends for you to live in it and draw from it every moment of every day. Paul says in Romans 15:13 that it is only through the “power” of the Holy Spirit that we are enabled to “abound in hope”. He says in Colossians 1:11 that it is only when we are “*strengthened with power*” that we can endure and remain patient and do it with joy! He again says in 2 Thessalonians 1:11 that “*every resolve for good and every work of faith*” that you and I accomplish is by means of his “power.” Power is the energy or working of God by which we are saved (Rom. 1:16; 1 Cor. 1:18, 24). And if that were not enough to convince you, the very kingdom of God in its essence consists not “in talk but in power” (1 Cor. 4:20). If you only had one word to describe the vast topic of the kingdom of God, it would be power!
- (7) **We often mistakenly think that the only individuals in the church who are recipients of God’s power are Apostles or Elders or Pastors or those with a seminary degrees who can read Greek and Hebrew** - But consider Stephen, neither an apostle or an elder or a pastor, who is described as “*full of grace and power*” as a result of which he did “great wonders and signs among the people” (Acts 6:8). Stephen was one of the first seven deacons. He was assigned “*to serve tables*” (Acts 6:2) so that the Apostles could devote themselves to preaching the Word and to prayer. The only thing that set him apart is that he was “*full of faith and of the Holy Spirit*” (Acts 6:5). Stephen, a deacon, was full of the same Spirit that filled and empowered Paul. It wasn’t a junior varsity Holy Spirit, a secondary, lesser version of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit that filled and empowered

Stephen wasn't a subset or smaller percentage of the Spirit that filled Paul and the apostles. The "power" that filled Stephen was precisely the same power that filled Paul, the same power that is available to work through you and me today. The Holy Spirit that was in Jesus, the Holy Spirit that was in Paul, is the Holy Spirit that was in Stephen and is in you and me. (Mrs. Iker)

- (8) This "power" is something not only that God has but something that he generously and abundantly gives to us** - We've already seen in Ephesians 1 and 3 that this power is given to us, dwells inside us, and works within us. But we see this in numerous other places as well: *"And he called the twelve together and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases, and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal" (Luke 9:1-2).* *"And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high" (Luke 24:49).* *"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you" (Acts 1:8).* And what was this "power" to which Jesus refers and promises will be ours? It is the same "power" of the Holy Spirit on which he himself consciously depended and employed to heal the sick. *"On one of those days, as he was teaching, Pharisees and teachers of the law were sitting there, who had come from every village of Galilee and Judea and from Jerusalem. And the power of the Lord was with him to heal" (Luke 5:17).* This is only one of several texts that tell us that even Jesus was the recipient of the power of the Holy Spirit that enabled him to do everything in his ministry. *"You yourselves know . . . how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him" (Acts 10:38).* On several occasions we read in the gospels that "power" goes out of Jesus. It is transferable. His power is imparted to others merely by touch: *"And Jesus, perceiving in himself that power had gone out from him, immediately turned about in the crowd and said, 'Who touched my garments?'" (Mark 5:30; cf. Luke 8:46).* Jesus felt the power of the Holy Spirit go out of him and the woman felt the power of the Holy Spirit enter into her body. Indeed, we read in Luke 6:19 that "all the crowd sought to touch him, for power came out from him and healed them all."
- (9) When we speak of God's power we're not talking about fleshly triumphalism in which we live above and immune to weakness or frailty or rejection or loss** - There are people in the charismatic community who understand God's power to be a ticket out of trial and tribulation. Power, to them, is the mechanism by which God intends to deliver them from weakness and persecution and financial pressure. But a consistent theme in Scripture is that the power of God is most clearly in evidence when it is seen in contrast with our weakness, indeed, when it is displayed and manifested precisely through and in the full light of our weakness. For example, when Paul visited Corinth he declared that it was *"in weakness and in fear and much trembling"* (1 Cor. 2:3). His eloquence wasn't nearly up to the standards of his opponents. *"My speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom."* No, my entire presence and ministry among you came *"in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God"* (1 Cor. 2:4-5). Far from proving to be a hindrance to

supernatural and divine power, Paul's weakness was the platform on which it was gloriously displayed. On this point see also 2 Cor. 4:7; 6:4; 12:9-10;

(10) 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”- Luke, who wrote both the gospel that bears his name and the book of Acts, uses the word “power” (*dunamis*) 25x. In twenty of those twenty-five occasions it describes what God does either through Jesus (10x) or through ordinary Christians (10x). In eight of the ten verses where “power” refers to what God does through Jesus (Luke 4:14; 4:36; 5:1; 6:19; 8:46; 10:13; 19:37; 21:27; Acts 2:22; 10:38) it has reference to his miracles, his signs and wonders. In nine of the verses that the word “power” is used to describe what God does through believers it is with reference to miracles or signs and wonders (Luke 1:15-17 [power of Elijah in preaching]; 9:1-2; 24:49; Acts 3:12; 4:7; 4:32-33; 6:8; 8:13; 19:11). Do you know what the tenth and final verse is where “power” is used? It is Acts 1:8! Acts 1:8 structures and governs what will unfold in the book and in the experience of the church. If in the other 9x where Luke uses “power” it always refers to the working of miracles, it seems reasonable to conclude that this is precisely what he means in Acts 1:8! Power for working miracles was to be an essential and expected element in the work of the ministry, together with power for preaching and witnessing.

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 he goes on (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!

So Paul's prayer is that God would enlighten the eyes of our hearts so that we will know the surpassing greatness of His power that saved us. It is the very power that raised Christ from the dead.

GOD'S MIGHTY POWER SEATED CHRIST AT HIS RIGHT HAND, FAR ABOVE ALL SPIRITUAL POWERS (Ephesians 1:20b-21)

“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” - Ephesians 1:20-21

God not only raised Christ from the dead. Also, He ascended bodily into heaven, where He now is (1:20b-21) *“seated at His right hand in the heavenly places, 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.”* God’s right hand refers to, as Calvin puts it (*Calvin’s Commentaries* [Baker reprint], on Eph. 1:20, p. 215), *“the power which the Father has bestowed on Christ, that he may administer in his name the government of heaven and earth.”* Calvin adds (p. 216) that the phrase, *“in the heavenly places,”* *“directs us to contemplate the heavenly glory amidst which our Lord Jesus dwells, the blessed immortality which he enjoys, and the dominion over angels to which he has been exalted.”*

Paul piles up four different words, *“principality, power, might and dominion,”* to encompass all spiritual powers.

Why Does Paul Mention These Four Words (*principality, power, might and dominion*) in Ephesians 1:21?

- (1) These words may indicate different gradations of rank or power among the angels and demons (Matt. 12:45)**
- (2) Paul’s purpose isn’t for putting our focus on the finer points of angelic or demonic organization**
- (3) Paul’s purpose and reason means that whatever levels of spiritual power exist, Jesus is over them all**
- (4) Paul’s idea was that there is nothing so elevated or excellent, by whatever name it may be named that is not subject to the majesty of Christ - Why didn’t Paul just call them “angels,” Calvin answers (pp. 216-217), *“it was to convey exalted views of the glory of Christ.... As if he had said, ‘There is nothing so elevated or excellent, by whatever name it may be named, that is not subject to the majesty of Christ.’”***

Paul adds, *“not only in this age but also in the one to come”* to make it clear that Jesus Christ is exalted to the place of absolute, supreme power in the entire universe.

- His authority is not just for a period of time, but for all eternity.
- Although we do not yet see everything subject to Him (1 Cor. 15:23-28), that day is soon coming.
- As Psalm 110:1 states, *“The Lord says to my Lord: ‘Sit at My right hand until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet.’”*
- God never gave that invitation to any of the angels or to any other created being. He only gives it to His eternal Son, who is of the same nature as the Father.

- Scripture promises that Jesus will come again to crush Satan and all that follow his evil ways.
- So, even though Satan and his evil forces still have frightening power, they are on God's leash. They can only go as far as He permits.

Practical Observation: 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 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.

GOD'S MIGHTY POWER PUT ALL THINGS IN SUBJECTION TO CHRIST AND GAVE HIM AS HEAD OVER ALL THINGS TO THE CHURCH (Ephesians 1:22)

"²² And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church." – Ephesians 1:22

The phrase, *"He put all things in subjection under His feet,"* reflects **Psalm 8:6**, where David reflects on the honor given to man to rule over God's creation on earth. This goes back to God's words at creation, that man would fill the earth and rule it, having dominion over all the animals (Gen. 1:26-28). What the first Adam lost through sin, Christ as the second Adam regained. While the complete fulfillment of these words awaits Christ's return and final victory over Satan and death (1 Cor. 15:24-27; Heb. 2:8-15), His resurrection, ascension, and present enthronement at God's right hand guarantees the outcome. All things, including the terrible forces of evil in the heavenly places, are under Christ's feet, even now. As I said, Satan is on a leash.

Then Paul adds that God *"gave Him as head over all things to the church."*

- This is the first mention of the church in Ephesians, and it is a major theme of the book.
- The Greek word translated **"church"** means, literally, **"the called out ones."**
- It never refers to a building, but only to God's people, called out of this evil world to follow Jesus Christ.

- Note that Paul does not simply say that Christ is the head of the church, but that God **“gave Him as head over all things to the church.”**
- The idea is that Christ’s ruling authority (headship) over everything in the universe is God’s gift to us, the church.
- Thus, **“The Church has authority and power to overcome all opposition because her Leader and Head is Lord of all”** (Francis Foulkes, *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, Ephesians* [IVP/Eerdmans], p. 65).

What does all of this mean practically? I think that the practical application is inherent in the final verse:

GOD’S MIGHTY POWER IS AT WORK IN US SO THAT WE WILL PROPERLY REPRESENT CHRIST ON EARTH (Ephesians 1:23)

“²³ which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.” – Ephesians 1:23

Paul adds that the church **“is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.”** The last clause is difficult to interpret. But before we consider it, note that Paul here brings in the familiar analogy, that the church is Christ’s body. He is the only New Testament author to use this picture. He develops it at great length in 1 Corinthians 12 as it relates to our relationships with one another, each with different spiritual gifts. But here it is the idea that Christ is the head and we are His body.

This implies an inseparable, organic union between Christ and the church. Organic means that it is a living union—we share in His life. If you sever your hand from your body, it is not in this living, organic union. We cannot do anything to produce or attain this union. It comes from God’s resurrection power alone. It also implies our submission to the Head. In a human body, if the limbs are not subject to the commands of the head, it is a spastic or malfunctioning body. If God has saved you through His mighty power, you must make it your aim to obey Jesus Christ as Lord of every area of your life. A disobedient Christian is like a spastic leg, jerking uncontrollably. He does not bring glory to the Savior!

But we need to tackle this difficult phrase, **“the fullness of Him who fills all in all.”** Some have taken “the fullness” to refer to Christ, who they say is the fullness of God, who fills all in all. But that is a heretical view. The Bible says that all the fullness of deity dwells in Christ (Col. 1:19; 2:9), but it never says that Christ is the fullness of the Father, which would put the Father under the Son. So the word “fullness” refers to Christ’s body, the church.

The next question is, does the word “fullness” have a passive or an active sense? If it is passive, it means that the church is filled or completed by Christ (somewhat similar to 3:19). If it is active, it means that the church in some sense fills or completes Christ. If this is the meaning, it is not implying that Christ is somehow lacking or dependent on us. As the eternal

Son of God, He is self-sufficient and has no need of us. Rather, it is an extension of the head-body analogy, that the head is not complete without a body. The body expresses the wishes of the head. In the wonderful purpose of God for us, He has given us the task of expressing Christ to the world. In that sense, we are His fullness.

Calvin takes this view (p. 218) and then points out that the next phrase, “who fills all in all,” “is added to guard against the supposition that any real defect would exist in Christ, if he were separated from us.” Rather, all that we are and have as His people comes from His gracious hand. Christ’s filling all in all not only refers to His gifts and power as given to the church, but also to His supreme presence and power in all the universe. As God asks (Jer. 23:24), “‘Can a man hide himself in hiding places so I do not see him?’ declares the Lord. ‘Do I not fill the heavens and the earth?’ declares the Lord.” So the phrase means (Peter O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* [Eerdmans/Apollos], p. 151), “Christ pervades all things with his sovereign rule, directing all things to their appointed end (cf. Heb. 1:3), and this entails his functioning as the powerful ruler over against the principalities (1:21) and giving grace and strength to his people, the church (4:13, 15-16).”

So the practical import of God’s opening our eyes to see the magnitude of His mighty power that saved us and exalted Christ over all, is that we should properly represent Him on earth. People do not see the risen and exalted Christ, but they see His body, the church. What do they see? Do we represent our risen, exalted Head in a proper manner? Do they see His grace, His love, and His holiness through our lives?

Conclusion

Warren Wiersbe (*Be Rich* [Victor Books], p. 30) tells of the late, wealthy newspaper publisher, William Randolph Hearst. He spent a fortune collecting art treasures from around the world. One day he found a description of some valuable items that he felt he must own. So he sent his agent abroad to search for them. After months of searching, the agent reported that he had finally found the treasures. They were already in Mr. Hearst’s warehouse. Hearst had been searching for treasures that he already owned!

Some to remember:

- (1) **If you are a Christian, God’s mighty power is already yours** - But are you aware of what you already possess - Perhaps, like Mr. Hearst, you are not aware of what you possess.
- (2) **You must ask God to open the eyes of your heart to know the surpassing greatness of His power toward you** - Are you experiencing God’s mighty power to overcome temptation and live a holy life? If not, you should entreat God to open the eyes of your heart so that you will know the surpassing greatness of His power toward you.
- (3) **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** - Ask God to give you new life in Him. Then live according to His mighty power.

