

The Great Power of God

Eph. 1:18-23

Introduction:

1. In the previous lesson we addressed the praise due God in light of His having blessed us with every spiritual blessing.
 - a. He has chosen us.
 - b. Predestined us to adoption as sons.
 - c. Redeemed us.
 - d. And made us His inheritance, a people for His own possession.
2. He has accomplished this through what He has done in Jesus Christ.
3. In the passage we have just read Paul prays that his readers will be enlightened and know the surpassing greatness of God's power toward us who believe.
4. It would seem that some would limit the manifestation of God's power to a miraculous healing, to speaking in tongues, to feeding 5,000. While such occurrences reflect the power of God, this is not what Paul is referencing here. Instead, what he is referencing eclipses these events like the sun eclipses a street light.
5. What is this power of God that Paul wants us to know about? Why does he consider it of "surpassing greatness"? Why does he consider it important that we know of its magnificence?

Discussion:

- I. Paul prays that his readers might know "the surpassing greatness of God's power toward us who believe" (1:19).
 - A. Paul prays that the "eyes of your heart may be enlightened" (v. 18).
 1. So that you will know what is the hope of His calling.
 - a. Already he has given us insight into the hope of our calling.
 - b. Our calling involves "the redemption of God's own possession."
 - c. It is a calling that involves a new beginning that reaches its culmination in a complete reversal of the effects of sin (Rom. 8:18-25; Phil. 3:20-21).
 - d. It is evident in the Book of Ephesians that this is a process already under way for believers. That is why Paul has been praising God in 1:3-14.
 2. As the eyes of our hearts are enlightened we are made aware of how God has acted in power for our benefit.
 - B. God has executed His power through Christ (v. 20). In Christ God has reversed the deteriorating effects of sin. He has overcome death.
 1. He raised Him from the dead.
 2. He seated Him at His right hand.
 - a. He is in a position of authority over all!
 - b. He is in a position of authority as head of the church.
 - c. Is this not what Peter was preaching on Pentecost? Cf. Acts 2:29ff. Is this not the implication of repenting and being baptized "in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins?" It is by His authority as King that we are forgiven.
 - C. If you are waiting for a miracle, don't overlook the magnificent power of God that has

acted for your forgiveness.

1. God has executed His great power for you.
2. He has sent Jesus for your forgiveness.
3. He has raised Him from the dead, and just as importantly, seated Him at His right hand. Don't overlook the great power of God! You might recall Naaman the

leper

who questioned Elijah's instruction of dipping in the Jordan thinking that God should manifest His power in some other way (2 Kings 5). May the eyes of your heart be enlightened.

- D. But the people of God need to understand the greatness of His power.
 1. We will praise God to whatever degree we understand the greatness of His power.
 2. The more we understand it the greater our praise.
 3. Diminished understanding results in diminished appreciation, diminished proclamation of His greatness (diminished evangelism), diminished respect, diminished obedience. Later in Ephesians in chapters 4-5-6 Paul is going to talk about how we are to live having experienced the great power of God.

II. God's power has raised us from the dead (2:1ff). Not only is God's power evident in what He has done in Jesus Christ, in raising Him from the dead and seating Him at His own right hand. It is also evident in what He has done for believers in a very personal way. He has raised us from the dead.

- A. We are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus (2:10).
 1. That means that He has operated on us.
 2. The creation here is not about Gen. 1, but about the creative work God has done to bring us to spiritual life.
- B. Both Gentiles and Jews were dead in sin (2:1-3).
- C. BUT GOD (2:4) acted in power to bring us to life.
 1. In mercy (v. 4).
 2. By grace (v. 5, 7, 8).
 3. Not by our power (v. 8-9).
 4. It is the gift of God (v. 8).
 5. Received by faith (v. 8). Cf. "His power toward us who believe" (1:19).
- D. God's great power is even manifested toward Gentiles (2:11ff).
 1. This was all in accordance with the eternal purpose of God carried out in Jesus Christ (3:11).
 2. Therefore we are not to lose heart in suffering (3:13). Why not? Well, if God has used His great power in this way would He abandon us now? No, this does not mean that there is not going to be suffering. It just means that it is temporary (Rom. 8:23b-25).

III. Paul prays that his readers might be strengthened with God's power that works within us (3:14-21).

- A. Now, again here, some of us would expect something miraculous—God infusing us with power in some “better felt than told” way.
- B. Well how does it happen?
1. Christ dwells in our hearts through faith.
 2. Paul is writing to them to help them comprehend the magnificence of the things of God, to know the love of Christ, to be filled up to all the fullness of God.
 3. God has given gifts to strengthen us (4:8, 11-16).
 4. These gifts are given that we not be like the Gentiles, but that our minds might be changed by learning Christ, being taught in Him and our actions be changed (4:17-23).
 5. Chapters 4-5-6 talk about the behaviors associated with being transformed by the power of God. We live according to the new life God has given us. Cf. Eph. 2:10: “We are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.”
- C. If we are “strengthen with power through His Spirit” (3:16), if we are “filled with His Spirit” it will be evident (Eph. 5:18) in . . .
1. In singing (v. 19).
 2. In giving thanks (v. 20).
 3. In subjective service (v. 21ff).
 - a. Wives.
 - b. Husbands.
 - c. Children.
 - d. Fathers.
 - e. Slaves.
 - f. Masters.
- D. Therefore, “be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might” (5:10ff).

Conclusion:

1. Do you want to experience the great power of God?
2. Are the eyes of your heart open to His work? Or are you looking for Him to work in some way that meets your expectations?
3. God has done exceedingly great and magnificent things. He is continuing to do great and magnificent things.
4. Do you see His power? Are you plugged into it?