

# Exceeding Greatness

Ephesians 1:19-23



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### **FOCAL Read Responsively** Ephesians 1:19-23<sup>KJV</sup>

And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, (20) **Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own 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 world, but also in that which is to come: (22) **And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church,** (23) **Which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all.**

Where is the power of the Christian and the power of the Church? Is the power in people, in our *numbers*, in our *offering*, in our *rituals*, or in our *things*? God answered this question a long time ago when He spoke through the Prophet Jeremiah, a man who stood virtually alone in the midst of an unbelieving generation. God said:

**Jeremiah 17:5-9 Thus saith the LORD; Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the LORD. {6} For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land and not inhabited. {7} Blessed is the man that trusteth in the LORD, and whose hope the LORD is. {8} For he shall be as a tree planted by the**

waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit. {9} The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?

The believer *must trust in God and God alone*. This is the message that the Apostle Paul is conveying to the Church even today. Under the inspiration of God the Holy Spirit Paul wrote of **the exceeding<sup>1</sup> greatness<sup>2</sup> of (God's) power<sup>3</sup> to us-ward who believe**. Other translations say "what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe<sup>NAS</sup>." and "what is the immeasurable greatness of His power to us who believe<sup>HCSB</sup>". God teaches us that the Christian *presently enjoys* great benefits from God through the Lord Jesus Christ. The Christian is the

1 Present Active Participle of G5235, ὑπερβάλλω, hyperballō, hoop-er-bal'-lo, From G5228 and G906; to *throw beyond* the usual mark, that is, (figuratively) to *surpass* (only active participle *supereminent*): -exceeding, excel, pass.

2 G3174, μέγεθος, megethos, meg'-eth-os, From G3173; *magnitude* (figuratively): - greatness.

3 G1411, δύναμις, dunamis, doo'-nam-is, From G1410; *force* (literally or figuratively); specifically miraculous *power* (usually by implication a *miracle* itself): - ability, abundance, meaning, might (-ily, -y, -y deed), (worker of) miracle (-s), power, strength, violence, mighty (wonderful) work.

NAS New American Standard version of the Scripture

HCSB Holman Christian Standard version of the Scripture

recipient of *infinite power from our Infinite God*. Look at our text.

## 1. The Christian Is A Recipient Of Infinite Power

**FOCAL** Ephesians 1:19-20 ... **what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, (20) Which he wrought in Christ**, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places,

That *infinite power* that the Christian stands on is the *work of God in Christ Jesus our Lord*. In another place we are told:

Ephesians 6:10-11 ... my brethren, **be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. {11} Put on the whole armor of God**, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

The Christian is supposed to "**put on the whole armor of God**", to "**stand in the power of God**". There is an armor that belongs to each Christian, and that armor was (as we read in verse 20 of our text) **wrought in Christ**. Think about that illustration of *armor*. Armor is something that is **of a different material** than the wearer. If I go into battle, my armor is not my skin. My armor is the thing that I wear *over my skin* to protect me. Further, armor is something **meant to take the**

**punishment of battle in my place.** When the enemy strikes me with a sword, the armor takes the blow, not I. If I take the blow then the armor is ineffective.

"I" must be *in* the armor, but "I" must not *be* the armor. Do you get that? In other words, if "I" am in the armor, then I am protected. If "I" try to be the armor, I will be defeated.

There are so many defeated Christians in this world today because they are either putting on the *wrong* armor, or else they are not wearing the armor that God has provided to them. When David fought Goliath he would not put on Saul's armor (**1 Samuel 17:39**) because, he said, "**I have not proved them**". This armor was not fitted to his body, nor was it suitable for his height and weight. David wisely rejected this armor, and instead went out with a **proven and invincible armor**. He went out **trusting in God His Savior**. He said:

**1 Samuel 17:37 ... The LORD that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine.**

When will we learn, Beloved, when will we learn?

Too many times Christians today go to the same place of failure that Israel went to, and try to slip into that armor and please God. Too many times we find ourselves going back to **Sinai in Arabia (Galatians 4:25)**, and try to put on the *armor of the Law*. There is no power in that

armor! Look at Israel's track record. When God gave the Law to Israel, they stood there and said with all sincerity:

**Exodus 24:7 ... All that the LORD hath said will we do, and be obedient.**

Forty days later (**Exodus 24:18; 32:1**) these people were forcing Aaron to melt down their jewelry and make false gods to worship. Why would you want to go to Mount Sinai - a place of lightening and judgment - to get powerful armor? Mount Sinai taught *shadows* and *rituals* and *feasts* and *of that which was to come*. Mount Sinai is a place where David tries to wear Saul's armor, a place where imperfect man tries to please a Perfect and Holy God. The Law is not unholy - it is perfect. We are sinners, we are imperfect, we are unable. The Apostle said:

**Romans 7:12-14 Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.** (13) Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But **sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good;** that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful. (14) For we know that **the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin.**

The Law on Mount Sinai is much like a microscope, bringing to light our sin nature. The preacher **C.H. Spurgeon** spoke once on a certain religious man. He said

of the religionist:

**"He thought it wicked to destroy life of any kind. He would not eat meat, or feed upon flesh, fish, or fowl; for anybody that destroyed life would destroy his own soul. "Well," said a missionary, "but you must do violence to your own conscience every time you drink, for the water you swallow teems with animalcule-living, moving creatures." Then he showed him a drop of water, magnified by a microscope. The evidence was clear, but instead of yielding to conviction, the Brahmin was enraged at the instrument which wrought the discovery, so he broke the microscope."**<sup>4</sup>

No matter how hard we try, we cannot be perfect. But Beloved, we do not need to be - for God secured our *purchase price* and our *armor* not at Sinai, but at *Calvary*.

**FOCAL** Ephesians 1:19-20 ... **what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, (20) Which he wrought in Christ,** when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places,

God tempered the Law in stone, a wonderfully symbolic

4 THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD, NO. 3534, PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, OCTOBER 19TH, 1916., DELIVERED BY C H. SPURGEON, AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE PULPIT, NEWINGTON

thing. You see, man without God's intervention has a *stony heart* (**Ezekiel 11:19; Ezekiel 36:26**). God must take our stony heart away. He must change us, make us obedient, draw us, make in us a *new creation*. This is what God has **wrought in Christ**. Jesus paid the penalty of our sin on Calvary<sup>5</sup>. What is left to pay? We do not now come to Church to earn our salvation, we come to Church to grow *closer to Him, to learn more of Christ and of this power that has been shed abroad in our hearts*. When Jesus cried out from the Cross (His **fourth word**):

**Matthew 27:46 Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?**<sup>6</sup>

This is the exact moment that your sins and mine were poured out on Jesus. Jesus Christ became a *living Sacrifice* for us who believe. Jesus as our High Priest **put away sin**:

**Hebrews 9:24-26 For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us: (25) Nor yet that he**

5 Easton's Bible Dictionary tells us "{Calvary is from the} Greek word Kranion, by which the Hebrew word Gulgoleth was interpreted, "the place of a skull." It probably took this name from its shape, being a hillock or low, rounded, bare elevation somewhat in the form of a human skull. It is nowhere in Scripture called a "hill." "

6 a fulfillment of Psalms 22:1 My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?

should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; (26) **For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away<sup>7</sup> sin by the sacrifice of himself.**

What is the power of God - the exceeding greatness of His power - that we who have believed have received? He has, quite literally, *erased sin in the sinner*. When the Father looks at you He sees *a son of God because of what God the Son has done!* We who believe have been released from condemnation *by the finished work of Calvary*<sup>8</sup>.

Removed from the Law, taken from Sinai to Calvary, how does the Christian live? We live by looking to, praying to, focusing on, following after **Jesus Christ our Lord**. We put on the **armor of God**. We put on **Jesus Christ**. What does the Bible say?

**Romans 13:14 ... But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof.**

<sup>7</sup> G115, ἀθέτησις, *athētēsis, ath-et'-ay-sis*, From G114; *cancellation* (literally or figuratively): - disannulling, put away.

<sup>8</sup> Galatians 3:23-26 ... before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. (24) Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. (25) But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster. (26) For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.

I live in the armor of God. I live *in Jesus*. If Jesus would not do it, we will not do it. If Jesus would do it, we do it. The Apostle was so bound to Christ as his armor he said:

**Galatians 2:20-21 I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. (21) I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.**

Our power, our armor, infinitely superior to anything this world has to offer, is Jesus Christ!

## **2. Christians Are Bound TOGETHER In The Use Of This Power**

**FOCAL** Ephesians 1:20-23 Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own 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 world, but also in that which is to come: (22) And **hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, (23) Which is his body, the fullness of him** that filleth all in all.

What is *infinity times infinity*? Can we measure the immeasurable? We cannot - but we must recognize that this text speaks of **Jesus Christ the Head, and the Church His Body**. The Christian is bound to Christ, and the Christian is also bound to other Christians *in the Church*. The Christian has an **exceeding great salvation**, but he also is part of an **exceeding great union**.

As important it is for the Christian to realize his armor is what Christ accomplished for him, it is *just as important* that the Church realize its power is vested in Christ. While we keep Christ and worship of Him central to our union, we will be as invincible as He is. Listen Beloved: Jesus is **far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, in both this world and in the world to come**.

If we are focused on Him, praying to Him, meditating on Him, studying His Word, honoring Him, glorifying Him, caring for Him, being obedient to Him - then where the Head is *we shall be*.

Israel died *on this side of the Jordan* because they refused to follow Jesus. Do you wish the same for yourself and your children? We must, as God's people, *wake up and obey Him!* Our power is in walking where He says, doing what He says, worshiping Him, loving Him.

**Jesus Christ is the Vine, and we who believe are the branches (John 15:5)**. How far can the Branch go from

the Vine? The Branch is attached, and receives its sustenance from the Vine. **Jesus Christ is the Head, and we who believe are the Body (Colossians 1:18)**. How far can the Head go from the Body before death comes? The Head and Body are bound together as long as there is life. Christ and His Church are bound together by such a closeness of union that where One is, the other must be.

Christianity is not an "I" religion, it is a *living relationship between Perfect and Immortal God with imperfect and mortal man*. We begin, individually, with the "us". On the day I was saved, "I" ceased being "I", but now it is "I and God" or better "God and I". He is in me, and I am in Him - forever! Immediately following the "us" of Christ and I, then came the "us" of Christ and I and *you all*. This is the Church. The Church, His Body, is loved by Jesus, so much so that God ...

**Ephesians 2:6 ... raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus:**

We are raised *together*. We are His, *together*. Jesus prayed for us:

**John 17:20-23 Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; (21) That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also**

**may be one in us:** that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. (22) And **the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one:** (23) I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.

The effective Church, much like the effective Christian, is only effective when its members *together put on Jesus Christ*. We must be One, both to one another and to Christ.

A net with one strand can not catch fish. It requires a many stranded net, each strand clinging to the other, and the Great Fisherman to cast it so that many souls can be reached.

We are Christ's Body, Christ's Bride, Christ's Branch, Christ's Church. If He is above all things, above the angels whether fallen or no, above all creatures, above all powers, then if we maintain oneness with Him and with one another we too shall be where He is.

What causes the death of a Church? What causes the failure of, for instance, *Ephesus who left her first love (Revelation 2:1, 4)*? What about *Pergamos who fell into false doctrine (Revelation 2:12)*? What about *Sardis, who defiled her garments (Revelation 3:1)*? Did God fail? Did God draw away?

The Scottish preacher Alexander Maclaren wrote<sup>9</sup>:

**"There is always the same flow from God. There are ebbs and flows in the spiritual power of the Church. Yes! And the tide runs out of your harbors. Is there any less water in the sea because it does? So the gift may ebb away from a man, from a community, from an epoch, not because God's manifestation and bestowment fluctuates, but because our receptivity changes. ... With Him there is no variableness. The gifts of God are without repentance and the Spirit that was given once, according to the Master's own word, is given that He may abide with us forever. ... If the churches of this country and of this day seem to be cursed and blasted in so much of their fruitless operations and formal worship, it is the fault of the churches and not of the Lord of the churches. The stream that poured forth from the throne of God has not lost itself in the sands, nor is it shrunken in its volume.**

God has given us a salvation that stands forever, has called us into eternal salvation, and promises to lift us high above anything this world can throw at us. We as believers need to remember that it is *our responsibility* to follow Christ our Head. Each believer *must follow* Him. And we *must love one another*, no matter what may come. Define your love by looking to Calvary. Look at Him and how He loved us. That is love - that is love!

May God touch your hearts with these words.

<sup>9</sup> Is The Spirit Of The Lord Straitened?, pg 59, *Classic Sermons on the Holy Spirit* by Warren Wiersbe