

Ephesian 1:19-23

God's Power in Us

By Marco deFelice for Faith Bible Church, Evansville, IN October 1, 2017
description: A prayer to know the power of God which is at work in us.

In your own strength, can you handle every situation in life? Can you overcome every difficulty, in your own strength? Perhaps a young person who has not yet faced many of the trials of life might think so. Perhaps a person who lives in the make believe world of movies or video games, where the heroes always find a way to win, might be deceived into thinking that we have the strength to overcome all problems.

But if you are realistic, if you are honest with yourself, you realize that our strength is not sufficient to overcome the difficulties of this life. Think of the problems we face: problems in relationships, health problems, financial problems, fears. And then there is the most difficult enemy of all to overcome, our own sin. If you are honest, you realize that **in yourself**, you do not have the strength to overcome the problems you face, and especially not your own sin.

We don't have the strength to overcome fear in face of deep trials. We don't the strength **in ourselves** to overcome discouragement, or bitterness, or anger, or temptation.

It is impossible to live the Christian life in our own strength, for we are weak. If it depended upon our strength, it would be impossible to make it to God. We cannot overcome our problems and especially not our sin, in our own strength.

When we consider how weak we actually are, on our own, when we consider how strong the temptations we face are, when we consider how subtle Satan is, we we consider that we are bombarded with temptations day and night, when we consider that if we take our eyes off of Christ but for a moment, we can fall into sin which can leave lasting scars on our lives, when we consider all of that, it is vital that we know the exceeding greatness of the power of God at work in us. Otherwise, we will be discouraged and we will fall.

There are so many situations in which our weakness is so evident.

For example, Think about it: you are already struggling to make ends meet. You have bills piled up, your car insurance is due, the washing machine is broken. You don't what to do. Then, your boss calls you to tell you they have to let you go. You don't see any options. You simply don't have the money. Your strength is not sufficient!

You are struggling with a rebellious teen child, and it seems that whatever you try things are only getting worse. You don't know what else to do. Your strength is simply not enough.

Your marriage is failing. It seems like no matter what you do, it only gets worse. You are helpless in your own strength.

Let me mention one more trial: many of us here are getting older. Getting older has its own set of trials. There are health issues, and there is death to face, our own, or that our our spouses. Our strength is not sufficient to overcome the trials on our own. If you are facing one of trials related to old age, the truths we want to see today are for you.

The worst trial of all: you are struggling with a habitual sin. You fall, confess it, but then you fall again. You hate this sin, you feel so contaminated, but it seems no matter how much you fight it, and strive to overcome it, you continue to fall, again and again. At times, you even wonder if you are truly saved. You cry out to God, but you fall again and again. You hate your sin, at times, you almost hate yourself. But you feel like a prisoner to your sin. It is too strong for you, and you are so terribly discouraged. How you recognize your weakness.

I really don't need to say more, because if we are honest, we all know that our own strength is not sufficient. If you recognize your weakness, then the truths that we want to look at today are for you.

Thanks be to God, there is a solution, but there is only one solution.

In order to have peace in the trials, in order to have calm in the storm, in order to find the strength to overcome our worst sins, and every other kind of trial, and the only way to have true peace in the trials, is to know the power of God at work within us, and to rely on that strength.

We must know the greatness of God's divine power, which He is working in us to complete his good work in us.

When we know God's power at work within us more and more, then we can rely on His power in our weakness. We can have peace, we can have victory.

We want to continue our study of Paul's letter to the Ephesians. Last week, you examined the first part of his prayer for the believers in Chapter 1. As an inspired prayer, we should pray this for one another. In this prayer, since God has divinely open the eyes of the believers, Paul prays that they would truly know and see three incredible truths, which can give us joy and peace to know that God will complete his work in us.

Today, we want to look in depth at the third truth. But let's read this passage, to understand what Paul prays for. Follow as I read Ephesians 1:15-23.

"15 ¶ For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, 16 I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, 17 that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, 18 having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, 19 and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might 20 that 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 rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this

age but also in the one to come. 22 And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, 23 which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all."
(Eph 1:15-23 ESV)

You've been studying this passage, and you've seen Paul prays that God would do a divine work in them to show them truths which man cannot understand or know with human reasoning.)

In this prayer, Paul is asking God to do a divine work so that the believers might know wonderful spiritual realities which are impossible man to know on his own.

The first reality is the hope of our calling, and the second is the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints. You looked at these incredible realities last week. Our lives are transformed when we know the hope of our calling and the riches of God's glory.

The more we know the glory which is before us, the greater our joy will be, and the more we'll see our problems as small and light, in comparison with the eternal weight of glory which awaits us.

God's power in us

Today, we want to consider what Paul means when he prays that God would cause us to know God's great power at work within us. Follow as I read again verse 19. I'll read it in the ESV,.

"and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might" (Eph 1:19 ESV)

Paul prays that we would know the incredible power of God which is at work in us. We so easily see our own weakness. We need to see God's power at work in us.

How great is God's power at work in us?

God's power at work in us is greater than the power of our sin, it is greater than the power of the world, and it is greater than the power of our flesh. It is greater than any power which exists, as we'll see in these verses.

As we consider the incredible power of God, I pray that we will recognize and understand that God is

working this great power towards us. In other words, God is using his supernatural, infinite power to complete his good work of salvation and sanctification in us.

In and of itself, just knowing of God's great power is not enough. We also need to know **the love of God**, and that God uses his power on our behalf, to complete his work in us. Thanks be to God, He uses his infinite power for our eternal good!

In Philippians 1:6 we learn that God will complete his work in us.

“And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.” (Php 1:6 ESV)

God has saved us by his mighty power, and He continues to use his power to complete his work in us. Fear not, o child of God. In Eph 1:3,4 we read:

“3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, 4 even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love” (Eph 1:3-4 ESV)

Before God created the world, He elected us, so that for all of eternity future we would stand before Him holy and blameless. God is working the greatness of his infinite power to accomplish this in us.

So, when we read of God's power at work toward us, we need to understand that God is using that power to accomplish what He chose to do before the world began. The greatness of God's power at work in us is the guarantee that God will fully accomplish his work in us.

Let's consider more in depth God's great power. Listen as I read again Ephesians 1:19.

“and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might” (Eph 1:19 ESV)

Human words cannot fully describe this power. The phrase “the immeasurable greatness” describes something which is beyond what is possible to mea-

sure or fully conceive. We find the “immeasurable” in Ephesians 2:7, where it talks of the riches of God's grace.

“so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.” (Eph 2:7 ESV)

the measure of God's grace is exceedingly great, it is without measure. In Ephesians 3:19, this same word is translated “surpasses”.

“and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.” (Eph 3:19 ESV)

The love of Christ surpasses knowledge, and in Eph 1:19, the power of God surpasses greatness. It is beyond greatness. The **power** of God is beyond measuring and understanding, as is the **love** of Christ.

However great are your trials, however great are your temptations, and however great is your weakness, the power of God at work in us is infinitely greater. It is beyond greatness.

The second part of Eph 1:19 says:

according to the working of his great might” (Eph 1:19 ESV)

Here, Paul uses three words to describe the indescribable. The first is “working”. The word comes from the root word which means energy. God is working in us with divine energy. The, the word “great” describes God's greatness, which is without measure. Finally, the word “might”, when used to describe God's power, describes infinite power. Each ONE of these words already describes infinite, divine power. Paul uses three, because God's power is indescribable and infinite. God's infinite power is at work in YOU, dear Christian.

God's working always produces that which God intends. God's might is above all other powers.

Putting all three words together shows us that absolutely nothing in all of the universe can stop God from fully accomplishing his good work in us, to conform us to the image of Christ, so that we can stand spotless and blameless in his presence for all of eternity.

The Power of the Resurrection

To help us to better understand God's power at work in us, God guided Paul to remind us that the power of God at work in us is the same power which God used when He resurrected Christ from the dead. Let me read vv. 19,20 together. Paul is praying that we might know:

"19 and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might 20 that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places," (Eph 1:19-20 ESV)

God works in us with the same divine power that He used to raise Christ from the dead and seat Him at his right hand in the heavenly places. Think about this. Death is a power from which no man can escape. That is why the disciples couldn't understand when Jesus told them that he was going to be crucified and then return to life. They knew that death was stronger than anyone. They did not understand the power of God.

The death of Christ was no ordinary death, it was death on a cross, a death of shame and weakness. Before the cross, Christ was beaten terribly, and did not even have the strength to carry the cross. He was stripped of his clothes, and so, hung in shame. But, the infinite power of God, that same power which is at work in us, raised Christ from the dead.

But there is more. God did not just raise Christ from the dead, but He raised Him to the **highest place**, the right hand of the Father in the heavenly places.

Christ is now seated in the highest place of honor in the entire universe. In the following verses, we'll see more of the glory which Christ has now, all because of the power of God, that same power which is at work in you and in me. It is the greatness of God's power which assures us that God will complete his work in us, and that nothing can separate us from God's love for us in Christ. It is his power which gives us victory over our worst sins, and over every trial.

Above all other powers

To understand even more God's power which is at work in us, follow as I read v.21. I'll start in v.19 for context.

"19 and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might 20 that 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 rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come." (Eph 1:19-21 ESV)

God used his grace, infinite power to raise Christ from the dead, and then to seat him at his right hand. Our Lord, Jesus Christ, is 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.

Our Lord is seated above, which means that He has full sovereignty over all powers and authorities which exist in the entire universe, now and forever. This list includes every type of power and authority, both spiritual and human.

NOTHING in all of the universe can hinder God from completing his good work in you, dear believer. You can rest in Christ.

Sovereign over All

Christ is sovereign over all. Let me read again, adding verse 22.

"19 and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might 20 that 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 rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. 22 And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church,"

(Eph 1:19-22 ESV)

God the Father has placed ALL THINGS under the feet of Christ.

Think about what it means that all things are under the feet of Christ.

--- 1) that includes **all of nature**, from the weather, to bacteria and viruses and cancer cells and earthquakes and hurricanes and all other parts of the natural world. All of these things are under the feet of Christ, which means Christ has full authority over these things.

If you or a loved one have any health issues, if you are facing any natural disaster, such as a tornado or hurricane, remember, it is all totally under the control of Christ. You need never fear any natural event, because our Lord and Savior has full control over all that happens to you.

--- 2) **All people are under the feet of Christ.** Christ is sovereign over all men. In Proverbs 21:1 we read:

“The king’s heart is a stream of water in the hand of the LORD; he turns it wherever he will.” (Prov 21:1 ESV)

The heart of every man, from the greatest to the smallest, is in the hand of the Lord. Christ is sovereign over all. So, we need not ever fear men. People can do absolutely nothing to us unless Christ allows it.

Is there someone in your life who is causing you pain, or suffering? Is there someone who is oppressing you? Dear child of God, I pray that you will know the infinite, absolute control of God over all things, including those people in your life who are causing you suffering. Please know that God is in control, and will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you can bear, and only if that suffering is for your true, eternal good. Fear not, dear Christian, loved by God. Men can do nothing against you if not according to the perfect will of God.

---- 3) **All spiritual powers are under the control of Christ.** The angels, the demons, all are under his control, and can do absolutely nothing unless allowed by Him. In Job, we read how Satan was totally limited by God. In the Gospels, we read how the demons trembled at the presence of Christ, and obeyed Him totally.

So, we need not fear any spiritual being. We only need to have fear and reverence of God.

Since ALL THINGS are under the feet of Christ, **nothing** can happen to you that is outside of God’s perfect, wise, loving will for you. We can rest in peace in all circumstances. Our loving Lord is in control.

Head of the Church

In verse 22, we also read that God the Father has given Christ as the Head of the Church. Let me read v.22 again.

“22 And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church,” (Eph 1:22 ESV)

The Church is made up of all true believers. Jesus Christ is our head.

Think of this: the Lord of all is our Head. The One who has full authority over all things, over nature, over men, over spirits, HE is our head.

We are the body of Christ. Dear Christian, what does the head do for the body? The head cares for the body. The head guides the body so that all of its needs are met. No part of the body is too small for the head. The head never neglects any part of the body.

And so it is for Christ as our Head. Dear Christian, our Head, Jesus Christ, has a perfect, complete care of YOUR life, and is infinitely powerful to do so.

Fills all in all

Note carefully the last part of this verse, and what it says about our Lord, speaking of the Church, which is the body of Christ. I’ll read the second part of v.22, and then v.23.

“22 And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, 23 which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.” (Eph 1:22-23 ESV)

The Church, that is US, dear believer, you and me and every true believer in the world and in history, WE are the fullness of Christ. God has chosen for Christ to be the head, and WE, the Church, are his body, which completes the person. What an immense blessing!

At the same time, this verse tells us that it is Christ who fills all in all. Our Lord, Jesus Christ, our Head, fills all in all. He completes us, He totally and wonderfully fills us. In Christ, we are full, we are complete. Listen to the goal of becoming mature, in Ephesians 4:13.

“until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,” (Eph 4:13 ESV)

In John 1:16, we read of how we have received of his fullness.

“For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace.” (Joh 1:16 ESV)

Christ fills all in all, and we have received from his fullness, grace upon grace. Our blessing is NOT based upon our circumstance. It is based on the fact that we have every spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

We are complete in Christ alone. Nothing else can complete us.

At times, when our lives are full of problems, we believe the lie that if God would just take away this or that problem, we could be content. But that is not true. We might have a person causing us much pain, and we think that if God would just change that situation, we would be content, But that is not true. Perhaps we are fighting a terrible health problem, and we think that if God would just bring healing, that we would have peace. But that is not what gives us true peace.

When we are in Christ, we are filled, and we have grace upon grace.

Our peace and our joy are only in Christ, not in our circumstances. In fact, it is when we seek our joy in our circumstances that we have conflict with others. It is when we seek our peace in circumstances that we have no peace.

Application

Let's go back to where we started. We started by recognizing that we are weak. In ourselves, we do not have the strength to overcome the problems that this life can bring.

Far worse, in ourselves, we do not have the strength to overcome our sins.

But we are not alone. We are not in ourselves. We are in Christ Jesus. Therefore, our heavenly Father, God Himself, is working HIS infinite, absolute power in us, to complete his work in us. How great is God's power which is at work in us? It is so great that it raised Christ from the dead and raised Him to the highest place, over all powers and all that exists in the entire universe. THAT is the power which is at work in us.

So, dear Christian, do not believe the lies which come into your mind, when you think things like: “I can't handle this. This trial is too difficult. I am too weak. This sin is too difficult to overcome.”

Instead, look to Christ. Look to HIS strength, the infinite greatness of HIS power, which is at work in you. That same power which raise Christ from the dead and set Him above all things, THAT divine power is at work in you. Live the truth of Ephesians 6:10.

“Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might.” (Eph 6:10 ESV)

Trust in God. Pray that God would open your eyes to see HIS mighty power which is at work in you. When your sin **seems** too strong to overcome, cry out to God, saying:

I can do all things in Christ who strengthens me. Oh Father, I can overcome this sin, because YOU are faithful, and you will not allow me to be tempted beyond what I can bear. I am no longer a slave to my sin, because Jesus Christ has set me free. YOU are my strength, oh God. YOU are my power. I look to YOU.

In times of great trial, when you have fears, LOOK to God in Christ. Pray to know HIS strength in your weakness. Your trial, your illness, your financial problems, your relationship problems, are nothing compared to the power of God at work in you. Rest in Christ. His strength will sustain you.

Let not your heart be troubled, trust the Father, and trust the Son.