

THE POWER OF GOD: DEMONSTRATED IN CHRIST'S EXALTATION EPHESIANS 01:19–23

Introduction

This is a great passage covering a much needed subject — the power of God. If men ever needed anything, they need the power of God in their lives. If men have ever been gripped by evil and shame, bitterness and hate, lust and immorality, cursing and anger, robbery and assault, murder and war, selfishness and greed, division and strife, disappointment and emptiness, boredom and purposelessness, it is today. Men desperately need the power of God to help them in their daily lives and to right the wrongs of society.

The glorious news is that God offers His power to men — if they will only turn to His Son Jesus Christ. He promises His power to all believers. Note that this passage is a continuation of the prayer of Paul. He is praying that the Ephesian believers might know God personally and intimately, for God gives His power to those who truly come to know Him. Coming to know God is the key to receiving the power of God.

- I. God's power: A great power (v. 19).
- II. The power that raised Him from the dead (v. 20).
- III. The power that took Him to heaven and seated Him at God's right hand (v. 20).
- IV. The power that exalted Christ above all creatures: in this age and in the next age (v. 21).
- V. The power that exalted Him as the Supreme Head of the church (vv. 22-23).

I. *Ephesians 01:19 The Power of God*

When a believer really knows God, he experiences power — the power of God Himself. Note how God's power is described:

=> It is *incomparable* (huperballon): surpassing, unlimited, immeasurable, beyond imagination.

=> It is *great* (megathos): mighty, explosive, beyond measure. This is the word from which we get the English word *megathon* which measures atomic explosives. Imagine the great explosive power of God!

The thing to note is that God's power is *for us*; that is, God takes His power and extends it, presents it, makes it available to the believer. How do we know this? Because of what God did for Christ. What God did for Christ He will do for us. God's power is demonstrated by what He did for Christ.

II. *Ephesians 01:20 Power of God Demonstrated in the Resurrection of Jesus Christ*

Believers are to experience the power of God — the same power that raised Jesus Christ from the dead. Imagine the enormous power needed to raise a person from the dead. God displayed such power when He raised Jesus Christ.

Acts 2:23-24 This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him.

Acts 3:14-15 You disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked that a murderer be released to you. You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead. We are witnesses of this.

Acts 10:39-41 "We are witnesses of everything he did in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They killed him by hanging him on a tree, but God raised him from the dead on the third day and caused him to be seen. He was not seen by all the people, but by witnesses whom God had already chosen — by us who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead."

Rom 1:4 And who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord.

The point is this: when God raised Jesus Christ, He demonstrated three things for men. He showed men that He had the power to do three things.

1. The power to raise Christ shows that God has the power to conquer all the trials and temptations of life. When God exercised the power to raise Christ, He conquered the most powerful trial that faces man — death. And in conquering death, God demonstrated that He has the power to conquer any trial or temptation of man, no matter what it is.

1 Cor 10:13 No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.

2 Cor 12:9 But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me.

2. The resurrection of Jesus Christ shows that God has the power to give man a new life and the power to live a new life before Him. After Jesus Christ had been raised from the dead. He was not living His old life, the life He had before His death. He was a *new Man*; He had a new life. He had been raised from the dead to live a new life before God forever. He walked before God in newness of life.

Rom 6:4 *We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.*

Eph 4:24 *And to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.*

Col 3:10 *And have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.*

1 John 2:6 *Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did.*

3. The power to raise Christ from the dead shows that God has the power to raise men from the dead. The believer shall experience the great resurrection power of God and be resurrected from the dead.

John 5:28-29 *“Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out — those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned.”*

John 6:40 *“For my Father’s will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.”*

Acts 24:15 *And I have the same hope in God as these men, that there will be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked.*

2 Cor 4:14 *Because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead will also raise us with Jesus and present us with you in his presence.*

1 Th 4:16-18 *For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage each other with these words.*

III. Ephesians 01:20 The Exaltation of Jesus Christ

Believers are to experience the power of God — the same power that took Jesus Christ to heaven and seated Him at God’s right hand. God did not just have the power to resurrect Jesus Christ, He had the power to take Jesus Christ into another dimension of being — into the spiritual world, that is, the world of the Spirit. God brought Jesus Christ to Himself and seated Him at His own right hand. He is literally there; His body is in heaven — the spiritual world and dimension of being.

Mark 16:19 *After the Lord Jesus had spoken to them, he was taken up into heaven and he sat at the right hand of God.*

Luke 22:69 *“But from now on, the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the mighty God.”*

Acts 5:30-31 *The God of our fathers raised Jesus from the dead — whom you had killed by hanging him on a tree. God exalted him to his own right hand as Prince and Saviour that he might give repentance and forgiveness of sins to Israel.*

Eph 1:20 *Which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms.*

The point of God's power is clear: He took Christ into heaven and exalted Him in order to demonstrate that He has the power to take men to heaven and to exalt them.

John 14:2-3 *“In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.”*

Acts 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. “Look,” he said, “I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.”*

Phil 3:20-21 *But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Saviour from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.*

Col 3:4 *When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.*

Rev 22:14 *“Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city.”*

IV. Ephesians 01: 21 Power that Exalted Jesus Christ Above All Creatures

Believers are to experience the power of God — the same power that exalted Jesus Christ above all creatures, both in this age and in the next age. Being seated at the right hand of God simply means having the highest seat of honour and authority in the universe. What God did was exalt Jesus Christ to rule and reign over all authority, no matter how great or powerful. Christ has been exalted “far above all rule and authority, power and dominion.” And to make sure nothing is excluded — Jesus Christ has been exalted above “every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come” (v. 21). All things are placed in subjection under Him.

Phil 2:9-10 *Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus even knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth.*

Heb 1:9 *“You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has set you above your companions by anointing you with the oil of joy.”*

1 Pet 3:22 *Who has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand — with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him.*

The point is this: God gave Jesus Christ the authority to rule and reign over all; He demonstrated that He has the power to exalt us to rule and reign with Christ. This God promises to do.

Mat 25:23 *“His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!’”*

Mat 25:34 *“Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.’”*

Luke 19:17 *“‘Well done, my good servant!’ his master replied. ‘Because you have been trustworthy in a very small matter, take charge of ten cities.’”*

1 Cor 6:2-3 *Do you not know that the saints will judge [rule, hold authority] the world? And if you are to judge the world, are you not competent to judge trivial cases? Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more the things of this life!*

Heb 6:5 *Who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age.*

James 2:5 *Listen, my dear brothers: Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him?*

Rev 5:10 *“You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth.”*

Rev 20:4 *I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge.*

Rev 22:5 *There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever.*

V. Ephesians 01:22–23 Jesus Christ, Head of Church

Believers are to experience the power of God — the same power that made Jesus Christ the head of the church. Jesus Christ paid the supreme price to start and build the church: He died for it. Therefore, God has given Him the supreme position over the church. Note two points.

1. The church is called the *body of Christ*. This is one of the Bible's most descriptive pictures of Jesus Christ and the church: the picture of the *human body* with Christ being the Head and the church being His body (see 1 Cor. 12:12-31). William Barclay points out that this picture says something of enormous value. Christ needs the church and church needs Christ (Jn. 20:21) (*The Letters to the Galatians and Ephesians*, p. 108.) The head cannot function without the body, nor can the body function without the head. The head dreams and plans. But a head, a mind by itself, is of no use. A head

must have a body to carry out the plans so that the dream can be realized. Christ came to bring the dream and plan of peace and reconciliation to a world of lost men, men who were alienated from God and from one another. Now the body, the church, must carry out the dream and plan. The message of peace, in the power of Christ, must be taken to men by the church.

The point is this: if God had the power to create the church and to make Christ the head of the church, then He has the power to make the body *function and work* for Christ. God has the power to *get us busy* for the Lord — the power to help us in our witnessing — the power to stir us to proclaim the message of reconciliation and to minister to the desperate needs of a world lost and reeling under the weight of sin, darkness, starvation, disease and suffering.

Acts 1:8 *“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”*

Rom 12:5 *So in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.*

1 Cor 12:27-28 *Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. And in the church God has appointed first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, also those having gifts of healing, those able to help others, those with gifts of administration, and those speaking in different kinds of tongues.*

Eph 1:23 *Which is his body, the fullness of him who fills every thing in every way.*

Eph 4:11-12 *It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up.*

Col 1:24 *Now I rejoice in what was suffered for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church.*

Col 2:19 *He has lost connection with the Head, from whom the whole body, supported and held together by its ligaments and sinews, grows as God causes it to grow.*

2 Tim 1:7 *For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.*

2. The church completes all for Christ. William Barclay again points out that the church is the instrument through which the fullness of Christ fills all in all — everything. Jesus Christ is working throughout the world and in human history to bring about God's eternal plan for the world. He is working and fitting everything into its proper place bit by bit, and He is doing it *through the church*. The church is the instrument of God for bringing His will about on earth. (*The Letters to the Galatians and Ephesians*, p. 109.)

Again, the point is that God has the power to use the church and its believers to work out His eternal plan for the world. Just think — the church is the body upon the earth that God is using to work out human history!

Mat 28:19-20 *“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”*

Col 1:16-20 *For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.*

Col 2:8-10 *See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ. For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority.*

2 Pet 3:9-13 *The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare. Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness. ■*