

Eph 1.19-23 The Exceeding Greatness of God's Almighty Power

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[0 : 00] If you take your Bibles and turn to the book of Ephesians, we'll be continuing in the book of Ephesians.

Chapter 1, as you turn there, a brief introduction and review of some of what's been covered so far, we have in the book of Ephesians this pastoral and theological letter which the Apostle Paul has written to saints, to Christians, to those who are separated to God.

It is written to fortify church unity. And church unity is thus fortified first with what is to believe, or orthodoxy, and then what is to be done, or orthopraxy.

And in the section that we looked at last time, which continues into today's text, the Apostle explains that he does not cease to pray in thanksgiving and intercession for the saints.

The saints being a community of people chosen by God, those who are chosen by the Father to be holy and blameless, who are predestined unto adoption as sons, who are redeemed by the blood of Christ, who are forgiven of sins, and who are sealed by the Spirit.

[1 : 31] Those who are purposed, purchased, and claimed by God. And as such, Paul intercedes for the saints by praying, to remember, for increased spiritual understanding, that they may know.

There are three particular things. One, the hope of the calling. Two, the riches of the glorious inheritance of the saints. And three, the exceeding greatness of God's power. Those first two things we reviewed last time, today we're going to look particularly at the exceeding greatness of God's power.

So today's sermon is on Ephesians chapter 1, verses 19 to 23. The exceeding greatness of God's almighty power. And the text will be divided into three parts.

The first being the supremacy of God's almighty power in verse 19. The second part, the demonstration of God's almighty power in verses 20 to 21. And the third part being the immensity of Christ's exaltation in verses 22 to 23.

So, in the book of Ephesians chapter 1, verse 1 to 23.

[2 : 46] Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints who are in Ephesus and faithful in Christ Jesus. Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.

Just as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, by which he made us accepted in the beloved.

In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace, which he made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence, having made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in himself, that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times, he might gather together in one all things in Christ.

Both which are in heaven and which are on earth in him. In him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things, according to the counsel of his will, that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of his glory.

[4 : 27] In him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of his glory.

Therefore, I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation and the knowledge of him, 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, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which 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 principality and power and might and dominion, in every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in that which is to come.

And he put all things under his feet and gave him to be head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

Lord, again, we thank you for your word. Lord, you who are God, the first and chiefest being, the uncaused first cause of all things, I pray, Lord, that you who created us, that you who sustain all life, that you who are a powerful God to save lost dead sinners, I pray that you would give us a spiritual understanding today of the truths from your divine revealed word, which we have inscripturated, written, and interpreted in a language which we can read and understand.

I pray that you would indeed give us spiritual discernment that we might have a true understanding of this text. I pray that as such, as the reading and the exhortation of your word, that it might be attended by the Spirit, and that you would bless, edify, and feed, and nourish the saints, and convict lost sinners, and that you would grow your church, and that you would expand your kingdom.

[6 : 51] I pray, Lord, that you would even use me. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. So, I'm sure we've probably all been confronted, or at least heard of the false dilemma problem that people try to present to stump Christians when they say, if God is all-powerful, can he create an object so big that he can't move it?

This is a false dilemma. It presents two options, neither of which are correct. The two options is that either God must have the power to create versus God's power to move.

So, it makes a dilemma, a comparison. It must be either one or the other, either God's power to create or God's power to move, and then the one must be against the other.

So, it presents the two options, both of which are based on a faulty understanding of God and his power. It's a trap. It's an attempt to stump. It's an attempt to confirm error.

However, it has a deficit understanding of God's almighty power. It presumes that God can and therefore must do anything.

[8 : 13] And if so, then God is either not powerful enough to make this object, or he's not powerful enough to move this object.

So, it presumes that all-powerful is synonymous with do anything. However, God cannot, in fact, do anything. The divine being cannot act contrary to his will.

God cannot sin. God cannot change. God cannot lie. God cannot die. So, there are things that God cannot do.

So, what he does do, he does according to his holy divine will. So, what is the key takeaway of this?

The key takeaway is that God must do anything. The key takeaway is that God is all-powerful. All power is derived from and delegated by God.

[9 : 15] God is almighty. So, our first division of this text is on the supremacy of God's almighty power. Verse 19.

And what is the exceeding greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his mighty power? Now, we best understand God's almighty power, God's exceeding greatness of the almighty power of God, when we unhitch our assumed perceptions of God from our own creaturely, finite limitations and weaknesses.

God is not dependent or contingent upon any of his creation. Consider this further. By way of creating all things out of nothing by the word of his power, God's almighty power, therefore, exists before creation, before the foundation of the world.

Now, this phrase, before the foundation of world, we've seen before in verse 4, where God chose before the foundation of the world. And the concept of before and the creation of the world, we took that into consideration.

We'll take it a little further. When we think about time, so before the foundation of the world, when we think about time, what exactly is time? Time is measurement of irreversible succession of change or one-directional progression.

[10 : 43] So if you picture a timeline, it's one-directional progression. It's irreversible succession of change. Time is measurement of it. And it is based on daily rotations of the earth and annual orbiting of the sun.

So, for example, the earth and the sun are a result of God creating the cosmos. The beginning of time. Or in the beginning.

The beginning of time was in the beginning. Therefore, prior to the beginning of time, God exists. God existed without time.

Or better yet, God existed outside of time. So this is not a matter of turning the clock back more to additional reverted increments of time, nor is it a matter of extending the timeline backwards for unrecorded succession of change.

This is outside of time. God existed without time. God exists outside of time. If God were to look down the tunnel of time, God would see himself.

[11 : 54] God fills all time and space. God's existence is infinitely timeless. This means God doesn't wait.

God doesn't learn. God doesn't react. God is not caused. Nothing is antecedent to God. Therefore, God's power is unsurpassably absolute.

Absolute. This means that God is not influenced. He's not forced. Or overpowered.

He does not act upon information or undergo change or suffer under anything or is moved into or out of his perfection. He is absolute.

God doesn't outsource power. God does not obtain power. But by virtue of his essence, God himself is power.

[12 : 59] He is not just all-powerful. He is omnipotence itself. God is power. God is almighty.

To put it another way, as theologians through the past have worded it, all that is in God is God. Well, what is God? The Westminster Shorter Catechism and the Baptist Confession say that God is a spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable, in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth.

God's power is as his being, which is infinite, eternal, and unchangeable, timeless, transcendent, self-existent, self-sufficient, independent, uncaused, most absolute, supreme being.

So what are the implications of this? The implications are eternally perfect actuality. He eternally accomplishes his holy will.

He's the ultimate, efficient, causal power. In other words, God is most powerful without change. If I were to say, let's all sprint into town and back, we would learn pretty quickly that we tire, that we decline, and that we fail, but not God.

[14 : 33] God's power is infinite, is boundless, it is immeasurable, it is inexhaustible, it is undepletable, it is unthwartable, and immutable.

This means that God's creation cannot deplete or exhaust God's power. God's creation cannot overthrow him, nor thwart him, nor frustrate him, nor confound, nor exasperate him.

It cannot cause God to suffer under it, or cause God in any way whatsoever. God's creation cannot overpower God.

God is almighty. God is almighty. So that's all good and well to say on paper, but you might look back in history and think about certain situations and say, what about that situation?

For example, what about the serpent deceiving Eve, and the subsequent fall of humanity into sin, misery, and condemnation? Even there, God is all-powerful.

[15 : 47] So yeah, but what about the Egyptians enslaving and oppressing God's chosen nation? Even there, God is all-powerful. Yeah, but what about the Babylonians sieging, destroying, and exiling God's city, temple, and people?

Even there, God is all-powerful. Well, what about the Romans arresting, mocking, reviling, and crucifying the Messiah?

Even there, God is all-powerful. Well, what about Nero persecuting, destroying, and exiling the Christians? Even there, God is all-powerful.

Even the Roman Colosseum public spectacle of brutally and violently persecuting martyrs of the faith? God is all-powerful. What about the Pope usurping the place of Christ and deceiving multitudes?

God is all-powerful. What about Henry VIII declaring himself head of the church and shortly after Bloody Mary executing faithful Christians for preaching justification by grace alone through faithful and Christ alone?

[16 : 52] God is all-powerful. Well, what about government sanctioned, affirming, celebrating, promoting, or legislating the murder of the vulnerable, abortion, infanticide, euthanasia, sovereign self-autonomy, expressive individualism, godlessness, sodomy, homosexuality, homosexual marriage, gender dysphoria, and subsequent rewarding of the evildoer while punishing those who do good?

Even there, God is all-powerful. Perhaps here is a better question. What about when God judges the living and the dead and brings all things into unity under Christ?

When earthly rulers, past, present, and future are brought before the throne of God, where will their power be? Or what about Satan and his evil forces of darkness?

Some have a tendency of dualism in their thinking for, in God and Satan as though they were equal in power infinity, as though God and Satan were in a power struggle or a wrestle or an arm wrestle and one cannot overpower the other and it requires the person to take a side and that person's additional power will help one side be stronger than the other.

This dualistic view of God and Satan as though equal in power and infinity is not true, it's not biblical. Satan, like the Egyptians, like the Babylonians, like the popes, and like the rulers, is one of God's creatures.

[18 : 30] And whatever power he may have is entirely from God and at his disposal. God alone is all powerful. Revelation 19.6 says, And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty thundering saying, Alleluia, for the Lord God omnipotent reigns.

So what do you fear? Or better yet, who do you fear? If you are not in Christ, then fear God and his wrath upon all who do not believe, who do not repent and turn to Christ alone for salvation.

Psalms 34 says, I sought the Lord and he answered me and delivered me from all my fears. If you are in Christ, just as Noah and company were carried safely through the deluge of judgment, so also those in Christ will pass safely into glory.

Nothing in death can overthrow the power of God, so also nothing in this life can. God is all-powerful.

Isaiah 41:10 says, Fear not, for I am with you. Be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.

[19 : 59] The exceeding greatness of his power toward us who believe according to the working of his mighty power, which 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 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.

So that brings us to our second division of this text, verses 20 to 21, the demonstration of God's almighty power, namely, the resurrection of Christ and the exaltation of Christ.

Resurrection and exaltation. So first, the demonstration of God's almighty power in the resurrection of Christ. It says, raised him from the dead.

This is from death to life. Firstborn from the dead. Christ victorious, Christ resurrected. He was raised because he was buried.

He was buried because he was dead. He was dead because he suffered and died. The pouring out of his life, the pouring out of his blood to pay a ransom, to pay the price for the sins of the people who were given to him by God as chosen, as purposed by God the Father, accomplished by the redeeming work of Christ by the shedding of his blood on the cross.

[21 : 33] He was raised. Christ was exalted to the utmost heights of glory. He was seated at the Father's right hand in the heavenly places.

Now, we might read that and think the Father's right hand, but I thought you just said that the Westminster Shorter Catechism said that God is a spirit. So here we have a term anthropomorphism.

I believe we've probably heard it before in our confession study. An anthropomorphism means having a human form and it is figurative language in scripture.

So it is figuratively attributing human characteristics to God. We know it's figurative because, for example, John 4:24 says God is spirit.

So anthropomorphism is creature accommodating language. What this means is we as creatures are not God, so we cannot relate to God particularly God in his essence.

[22 : 45] We want to be able to relate to something in order to comprehend it or to be able to grasp it. We want to be able to imagine something in order to get it.

But we can't with God because we're not God. So, through creature accommodating language, we can see figuratively an understanding of the ways in which God acts.

God is a literal materialistic view of the divine. We cannot relate to or imagine God. So how we properly understand these things is when we see a text about God's actions, we don't take anthropomorphic figurative language to try to define, therefore, God is a creature.

Rather, as a first principle, we take the clear text from scripture about God's essence to understand what God is, and we take that with us and apply it to texts that explain to us God's works towards his creatures or God's actions.

So the doctrine of God is the foundation and interpretive key for all subsequent theological discourse. A careful formulation of God that we take with us as foundational building blocks of interpretation.

[24 : 09] So texts that speak clearly about what God is, for example, John 4, 24, God is spirit. We carefully formulate a doctrine of God and we take that with us when we understand verses like this.

So, seated him at the Father's right hand, this anthropomorphic creature accommodating language of right hand means the place of greatest honor, place of greatest nobility, of greatest dignity, of greatest authority.

The humanity of Christ, remembering the person of Christ, two natures, divine nature, the human nature. So the humanity of Christ invested with highest exaltation and blessing, while the divinity of Christ always eternally co-equal with the Father and undivided in essence and glory, without conversion, without blending, of divine essence with the human nature, without confusion.

Seated him at the Father's right hand. Seated means a completed work. Christ, the triumphant messianic branch of David, abiding in the holy of holies with the Father in an everlasting kingdom of glory.

John 12, 41 says that Isaiah saw Christ's glory and spoke of it. So when we look back into Isaiah, verse 6, we see, in the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of his robe filled the temple.

[25 : 52] Above it stood seraphim. Each one had six wings. With two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one cried to another and said, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God of hosts.

the whole earth is full of his glory. And the posts of the door were shaken by the voice of him who cried out, and the house was filled with smoke.

So that brings us to the exalted Christ. The demonstration of God's almighty power and the exaltation of Christ. Our text says far above all, far above all principality and power and might and dominion.

Christ exalted to the greatest of power, worldly and heavenly, material and immaterial, corporeal and incorporeal, present and future, far above all and above every name that is named, all under his feet, at his command and absolute disposal.

In Philippians 2 we see, therefore God also has highly exalted him and given him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow of those in heaven and of those on earth and of those under the earth and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

The power of God in the whole of our salvation. 1 Peter 1, 3-5 said, Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his abundant mercy, has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time.

[33 : 49] So just as by God's power we are born again, so by God's power we are kept just as by God's power we are born again, so by God's power we are kept regardless of various trials.

but by God's power we are kept through trials. Blessed assurance not by my power or lack thereof, but by God's almighty power.

And, furthermore, Christ, our Redeemer, is exalted on high and ever lives to intercede for us. In the book of Hebrews, chapter 7, it says, but he, because he continues forever, has an unchangeable priesthood.

Therefore, he is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through him since he always lives to make intercession for them.

John Flavel, another Puritan, said, think how safe the people of God in this world are whose head is in heaven.

[35 : 11] Why do we tremble thus? Do we not see our head above water? If he lives, believers cannot die. John 14, 19, because I live, ye shall live also.

Yes, it is true that no man can come to Christ except by the power of God. John 6, 44 says, no one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him.

But, embracing Christ, receiving Christ, resting on Christ, is not forced or driven involuntarily. The unregenerate, by fallen, sinful nature, does not seek after God and rejects Christ in opposition to him.

so, how does a rebellious nature come without being forced involuntarily? By the power of God.

By the power of God, the old man dies in Christ and is made new in Christ with a new heart, mind, and will, a new man. 2 Corinthians 5, 17 says, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.

[36 : 25] Old things have passed away. Behold, all things have become new. And the new man, drawn by the Father, is now genuinely and earnestly willing.

Not by a self-generated or fallen human nature, but by the power of God. Psalm 110.3 says, willing in the day of God's power.

Again, Ezekiel 26, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you. I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put my spirit within you and cause you to walk in my statutes and you will keep my judgments and do them.

Consider the grafting of a branch into a rootstock. The branch, the graft, is cut off, it is severed, it is separated and it is grafted onto the rootstock.

It does not by itself sever itself and put itself over onto the rootstock and graft itself. However, being severed, separated, and grafted it must take hold and live.

[37 : 36] So if you are not, if you have not yet taken hold of Christ, abandon any hopes of a self-generated righteousness or justification. Come unto Christ, all who are weary and burdened, and he will give you rest.

Take hold of Christ, receive Christ, rest on Christ, embrace Christ. John 6, 37 says, all that the Father gives me will come to me and the one who comes to me I will by no means cast out.

Give praise to God for the Lord God omnipotent reigns. Let's pray. Dear Lord, you indeed are mighty, you are the Lord God almighty, you are all-powerful, you have created all things, you exist outside of time, you are eternally and infinitely timeless, and all that exists that is not God is your creation, and all that you have created is at your disposal by your power.

I thank you for the confidence that that gives us in this life, that anything that we may encounter as a trial is your creation and is at your disposal, and you are the first cause, the uncaused one who is working out your eternal, infinite, holy will.

I pray that you would help us to trust you, that we would have the spiritual wisdom to apply your word to life situations that are hard.

[39 : 07] I pray that as such you would help us to trust you, to fear you, to desire you, to love you, and thank you for the spiritual blessings for the saints in the heavenly places.

I pray that you would help us to meditate on these things, to meditate on your power, to meditate on your word throughout this week. I pray this in Jesus' name.

Amen. Now, as we're working through an Orthodox Catechism, we are currently at question number 112 and 113.

May a man swear reverently by the name of God. Yes, he may, when lawful magistrates or necessity require it, by this means, the faith and truth of any man or thing to be ratified and established, both the glory of God may be advanced and the safety of others procured.

This kind of swearing is ordained by God's word and therefore was well used by the fathers both in the Old and New Testament. And 113.

[40 : 16] Is it lawful to swear by saints or other creatures? No. A lawful oath is an invocation of God whereby we desire that he, as the only searcher of hearts, bear witness to the truth and punish the swearer if he knowingly swears falsely.

No creature deserves this honor. If you'll take your hymns, we'll stand and sing hymn number seven, Blessed be the Lord our God. That's hymn number seven.

Amen. Amen.