



**Series:** Ephesians: Life In Christ

**Date:** August 14, 2023

**Speaker:** Pastor Spence Shelton, Lead Pastor

**Text:** Ephesians 1.1-14, Walk in the Power of God

### INTRO

We are continuing our walk through the letter written to the Church in Ephesus. So make your way over to Ephesians 1.15-23. Let's get into it. Today we are going to talk about the power God has directed TOWARD us who are IN Jesus. Our passage today is mostly a prayer that the author Paul is praying for this young church. We'll read it and talk about it.

15 This is why, since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, 16 I never stop giving thanks for you as I remember you in my prayers. 17 I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, would give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him. 18 I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened so that you may know what is the hope of his calling, what is the wealth of

his glorious inheritance in the saints, 19 and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the mighty working of his strength.

20 He exercised this power in Christ by raising him from the dead and seating him at his right hand in the heavens — 21 far above every ruler and authority, power and dominion, and every title given, not only in this age but also in the one to come. 22 And he subjected everything under his feet and appointed him as head over everything for the church, 23 which is his body, the fullness of the one who fills all things in every way. -- Ephesians 1:15-23

This is a pastor praying for his church he loves to KNOW the POWER of God directed to them. And he doesn't just pray this prayer to God. He sends them his prayer. There is a benefit to them hearing what he is praying for. Some measure of the power of God would be unleashed among them just by increasing their awareness to their access of said power.

Mercy, I pray this prayer for you. And I believe the power of God will be unleashed in THIS church as we examine and sit under his word today. I'm not preaching in vain. I come in here expecting God to move in you through the preaching of His word - not an empty routine. And though I think this every week



the subject of this prayer is what leads me to tell you this about preaching. I believe God does something in our hearts through the preaching of His word.

And the thing Paul is going to MAJOR ON in his prayer...there are 3 things he prays for but one he elaborates on, and so we will likewise focus on that one thing. Here is is:

**The power that God used to raise Jesus from the dead is now directed toward you who believe.**

Or to shorten it: **Resurrection power here and now.**<sup>1</sup>

That is the major emphasis of this prayer Paul prays for the Ephesian Church and it is the major emphasis for us today. Resurrection power today. And the reason why I want to focus on it is because I know most of you do not describe your Christian life as walking in RESURRECTION POWER. You don't describe your Christian life as powerful, and you don't feel power at ALL, certainly not resurrection power.

- Maybe you think of God's POWER working as a thing of the PAST. As a thing for BIBLE TIMES. When God parted the red sea or raised Jesus or saved Paul from death so many times but you don't think about walking on

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<sup>1</sup> John Piper articulated the main idea of Paul's prayer as 'resurrection power now' in a sermon he preached on Easter 2010 at Bethlehem Baptist Church titled "The immeasurable greatness of his power toward us." I owe this abbreviated version of the main idea to him.

Monday in the POWER of God. That's not your experience.

- Maybe you really want to believe but you just don't expect the POWER of God to show up in your life. You don't think prayer works and maybe God isn't that powerful because He hasn't changed the things I asked Him to the way I asked him to. I prayed, they still got sick. I prayed, somebody died. I prayed, somebody left. If God's power is here and I ask for it in these spaces and bad stuff still happens...either He isn't powerful or He doesn't care. Where is God's power!?!?!?

That's why we need this prayer so much. We've pressed the mute button on the power of God in our lives and churches when we need to turn up the volume. And in a minute we will talk about why you don't believe or walk in God's power. But let's work through this first.

**15 This is why, since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints,**

Two things this pastor is thankful for. A testimony has come to Paul about the church in Ephesus. And the testimony is - FAITH in the Lord Jesus and LOVE for all the saints. FAITH - how do you know a group of people have faith? FRUIT. There is something visible about them. And the fruit is - LOVE for the saints.



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Francis Schaeffer years ago said LOVE is the final apologetic for the gospel. Meaning the best PROOF that Jesus really was born of a virgin, lived a sinless life, died on the cross as a payment for the sins of sinners like you and me, rose again, ascended to the father, sent the Holy Spirit to EMPOWER the church by living in each one of us, and one day He is returning to make all things new...THE BEST PROOF that all that is true: Christ-like love. It's not our subject today, so I won't stay here. BUT - FAITH-FILLED CHURCHES are LOVING CHURCHES. SERVING CHURCHES. GENEROUS CHURCHES. Is that you?

**16 I never stop giving thanks for you as I remember you in my prayers.**

This whole thing today hits me as your pastor in a really powerful way. Because I read it as your pastor. And I feel this. I am so thankful for you, church. And I take my thankfulness for you to God. Not often enough, I was convicted this week about that. BUT, my thankfulness leads me to more prayer. What I see week in week out is a church that loves one another. Like God has started something good here and I want to see him continue that good work in you.

Ok now into the meat of today. To what Paul prays:

**17 I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, would give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him.**

The GLORIOUS Father - would give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation - in the knowledge of Him.

What does this mean? See, they have already been granted the Holy Spirit. Listen to me, if you are in Christ God has given you the Holy Spirit who now dwells or lives in your soul. THAT is remarkable. One of the reasons we don't know the power of God is because we don't believe GOD is actually walking with us everywhere we go. But that is His promise to us in Christ.

So he's not asking God to give what was already given. He's asking for the Spirit to give them a fresh outpouring of wisdom and revelation onto them. And the subject is - in the knowledge of Him - God the glorious father. In other words Paul is praying...that GOD would reveal himself more to the Ephesians. What a prayer. He's about to specify what about God he wants them to know but it starts with, God would you help them know you more? Would you reveal yourself to them?

Would you begin praying that prayer over your family? Over your community group? Over our church? "God reveal yourself MORE to us!" We WANT TO KNOW YOU MORE. That's a good prayer God is very interested in answering.



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18 I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened so that you may know...

The heart is your spiritual center. The core of who you are. So to say the eyes of your heart is to say...I'm praying for spiritual SIGHT. That you can see what God is doing. See what he is praying for is that they may "know" something. But even the devil KNOWS these things Paul is going to pray for. SO it can't be just knowledge of facts. Because that would be the same as knowing what the devil knows. It's got to be something else. It's experiential knowledge. He wants their souls, the eyes of their hearts, to experience - know it.

- Ex: My favorite ice cream flavor is Mint Chocolate Chip. Everywhere we go, that's what I'm getting. I'll even get the neon green - clearly you just put food coloring in this - version. I love it. There's a difference between reading a label as you look through the little counter window & see the tub & it says something like Minty-Choco-Chippity or whatever cute name they've given to it. You can have knowledge - I know what that is. But that's different than TASTING IT and KNOWING it by experience. I KNOW mint chocolate chip.

THAT is what he's praying for. The kind of KNOWING where you *experience* your knowledge of God like. Where God is not facts you know, but a person you personally know. Ok, so what does he pray they know? 3 things. This is textual evidence Paul was

a baptist preacher. Even his prayers have 3 points. Not going to focus on the first 2 but will touch briefly. But he prays they know these 3 things. He doesn't pray they achieve these 3 things. GET the calling, GET the inheritance, GET the power? NO. He is saying KNOW what is ALREADY YOURS in CHRIST. ALL OF THIS IS ALREADY YOURS! And you are missing it!

What is the hope of his calling,

Paul prays for these believers to *know* to - to see if from their soul & experience it - HOPE. Not just any hope, but the source of the greatest hope available to humanity. The hope of the calling of God. He has called you. Called you by name in fact. You are His. And you are forever His. Are you experientially acquainted with unshakable hope? God wants that for you. Some of you are. I see it and your hope strengthens my hope. You've clung to it in storms and found it to hold when nothing else did. And now you KNOW that hope.

What is the wealth of his glorious inheritance in the saints,

Do you know...do you experience the value God places on you? It's remarkable. The prayer is for you to know...not YOUR inheritance, But that YOU ARE **HIS** inheritance. The treasure at the end of all things for God...is the church. It's His bride, His inheritance. The one treasured possession He has set His eyes on. THAT is the WORTH God has placed on you. Knowing that worth creates humble self confidence that carries you through



highs and lows with joy. You are so much more valuable than you realize.

**19 and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the mighty working of his strength.**

Immeasurable greatness of His power...it's not a little bit of power...it's immeasurably GREAT. And it is TOWARD us who believe. God is directing His immeasurably great power toward us who believe. According to - the mighty working of His strength. Immeasurable, Great, Mighty, Strength. Paul piles up all the synonyms he can find to try and articulate divine power. And then having done his best to describe it in words he draws their minds to the most impressive and important display of this power in human history. Hear this - The power that God is directing toward them is the same power that God has used before:

**20 He exercised this power in Christ by raising him from the dead and seating him at his right hand in the heavens —**

The power of God directed to you who believe is **RESURRECTION** power. God's power brought Jesus out of the grave. And I pause here in case you are like yeah pastor I know that. And the point is...YOU may only know it like the devil knows it. YOU KNOW THE FACTS. The prayer is not for your head knowledge. It's a prayer that you might EXPERIENTIALLY KNOW the power of God that raised Jesus from the dead. Do

you have first hand experience with death to life POWER? Well if you are a Christian, you should. That's next week. You were dead in your sin. And Christ raised you. Talk about that in a minute. And its not JUST resurrection power.

It is an exalting power. This power brought Jesus out of the grave and he was seen by some 500 eye witnesses. And then in front of the disciples God lifted Jesus again. From right in front of their eyes he ascended into heaven to where? THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD THE FATHER. Put back on the heavenly throne that is rightfully his. Jesus is not just the son of a carpenter or a good teacher no he is KING sitting on a throne and Paul says that throne is

**21 far above every ruler and authority, power and dominion, and every title given, not only in this age but also in the one to come.**

Jesus' reign is MORE POWERFUL. More powerful than any ruler or authority...that's the seen realm. More powerful than any power of dominion - that is the unseen spiritual realm where the devil and his demons work...and just to make sure nothing is left out he reigns over every title that is ever given... and he does so...FOREVER. Jesus' reign is ETERNAL. Jesus's reign is all Powerful and Permanent.

**22 And he subjected everything under his feet and appointed him as head over everything for the church,**



Not only does he have MORE power than any other power in any realm...All the other things are his subjects. HIS AUTHORITY IS COMPLETE. All rulers & powers are within His kingly purview and are subjected to him. His Power and His authority are absolute. Now this is important. A little later Paul is going to call Jesus the head of the church. But here he calls Him the head of EVERYTHING. And this universal headship of Christ is a benefit for the church.

Our head - Christ - is not just our head, but the head of ALL THINGS. DO YOU KNOW THE POWER SPECIFICALLY GIVEN TO YOU CHURCH? See we the church have the power to overcome all things because our head is the one who is head over all things. Out of all the powers in all the realms, the one bestowed specifically on us is the one that reigns supreme in the universe. That's so that as we go out on the earth representing Him...we go out with power greater than any other power that would come against us. And he says about the church:

**23 which is his body, the fullness of the one who fills all things in every way.**

We are His fullness. Now that does not mean we fill up Jesus because Jesus is not lacking in any way. It means Jesus fills up the church. We are the visible fullness of Jesus...the one who fills the universe.

The power of God that is: IMMEASURABLY GREAT, RESURRECTING, EXALTING, TOTAL, ETERNAL, RULING, & FILLING...THAT POWER IS now directed to YOU.

**If THAT is true, I want to spend the rest of the sermon simply addressing this question: why do we not experience that power more in our lives?** What Paul prays in verse 18 should clue us in.

**18 I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened so that you may know...**

There is something dulled or dim in our spiritual sight. And that is why they didn't know the power of God directed to them. What keeps our spiritual senses dulled? Why don't we experience the hope of our calling, our value as God's inheritance, and why don't we have experiential knowledge of the power of God? Our souls have been in some measure dimmed to this knowledge. BY WHAT?

3 things: Sin, Satan, & A broken world.

**We don't know the power of our God because we don't know the power & depth of our sin**

Nothing hardens our hearts towards God like our sin. And most of us are far too comfortable with our sin. It's not that big of a deal and therefore...God is not that big of a deal. I don't have a great problem so I don't have a great need for great power. I



think this is the great problem of the church. We are so arrogant when it comes to our sinfulness. We are functionally more concerned with losing weight, getting good grades, getting a promotion, ensuring the safety of our children, and making fun memories than we are about being rescued from the depths of our own sin.

We have an incredible ability to numb ourselves to our sinfulness and this is why we do not have experiential knowledge of the power of God. We don't want it all that much. Now that's not everybody. But it is a lot of us. God who is HOLY & GOOD & LOVING & HAS DIRECTED HIS LOVE AT US...We don't care that much. Because we don't need it.

Scripture says the wages of sin is death. And that death is not just physical. It's spiritual and eternal. We are forever separated from God because of our sin. And we are bound for CERTAIN ETERNAL DEATH without the POWER of God in the gospel. And because death is something MOST of us think is off in the distance somewhere...we aren't MOVED by our need to be saved from death.

But you talk to Christians who have made a mess of their lives. Christians who are AWARE OF THEIR PROPENSITY TO SIN, WHO HAVE EXPERIENCED DESTRUCTION at their own hands. Talk to a recovering addict for example. And they will CHERISH their salvation and EXALT the power of God to save because they KNOW IT experientially. They know the depth of their sin &

the power of their sin nature so they KNOW the power of God because they ARE LOST without it. And so they stand IN AWE of the VICTORY THEY HAD TODAY.

**We don't know the power of our God because we don't know the power of Satan against us**

I realize to those of you who are not Christians this may sound antiquated. Do we really believe in Satan and evil powers at work? Yes absolutely. He has power over all powers. If you KNEW the strength of the power at work against you

**8 Be sober-minded, be alert. Your adversary the devil is prowling around like a roaring lion, looking for anyone he can devour. -- 1 Peter 5:7-8**

He is a ROARING LION ON THE HUNT. He's hungry. His food is the people of God. He is HUNTING YOU. The king of the jungle - The king of the enemies of God - is hunting you. He wants to destroy your life, he wants to destroy your faith. He wants you to run away from God. AND THE ONLY WAY TO OVERCOME HIM IS ACCESSING THE POWER OF GOD DIRECTED TOWARD YOU THROUGH FAITH IN CHRIST JESUS.

**9 Resist him, firm in the faith, knowing that the same kind of sufferings are being experienced by your fellow believers throughout the world. -- 1 Peter 5:9**



You won't KNOW the power of God if you don't wake up to the POWER of the enemy that our GOD is actively protecting you from with IMMEASURABLY GREAT POWER directed toward you.

If you knew the enemy within and the enemy without and you are sitting here in church with ANY MEASURE OF VICTORY. I'm not talking total victory - we won't have that until we see Jesus face to face in glory. BUT, if you have any measure of victory today.

- You didn't go on a drinking binge last night
- You didn't tear down your husband or wife with your words that you were feeling
- You didn't deep dive into pornography yesterday
- You didn't GIVE UP on God this morning
- You DID serve your spouse, You did read your bible this week, you did choose holiness when temptation came like an overwhelming force at you
- You did receive healing from that sickness, you DID step out and share the gospel with that friend,

ANY MEASURE OF VICTORY whether it was A STEP RESISTING THE DEVIL OR PROGRESSING FORWARD IN HOLINESS - IF YOU KNEW THE GREAT POWERS WORKING AGAINST YOU you would KNOW THE IMMEASURABLY GREATER POWER WORKING FOR YOU IN THOSE VICTORIES.

AND hear me - If your battle isn't over - YOU WILL FIND PEACE THAT THE GREATEST POWER SO GREAT IT CANNOT BE MEASURED... IS YOURS!

And if you feel defeated by your sin - Oh listen this is where it's beautiful. The enemy is lurking right there as you lie on the ground defeated. Wanting you to feel shame. In fact maybe you are listening to this online and you didn't come to church because you felt so ashamed of your defeat.

Listen to me - WHO DID JESUS COME TO SAVE? Sinners. The very enemy who tempts you to sin then turns around and tells you that you should know better. You should be better. How could you? How could you? So in shame and guilt you slink around in the darkness and Jesus is saying "I have come to seek and save the lost."

In fact, before Paul became a Christian, he was a murderer of Christians. That was his assignment and passion. He hunted Christians. And one day as he was traveling to a town called Damascus to hunt down some more Christians... he encountered Jesus. Bright light shines that just drops him to the ground. And Jesus says, "why are you persecuting me?" Because when you persecute the church you persecute Jesus himself. But instead of killing Paul right there, Jesus saved him. Because that's what Jesus does. He saves sinners. His POWER is greater than the power at work in you. So if you are feeling





like a defeated sinner, hear the apostle Paul speak the hope of the power of God over you:

15 This saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance: “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners” — and I am the worst of them. 16 But I received mercy for this reason, so that in me, the worst of them, Christ Jesus might demonstrate his extraordinary patience as an example to those who would believe in him for eternal life. 17 Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen. -- 1 Timothy 1:15-17

The way we sing this - For I am not my sin and will never be again. There is FREEDOM in the Lord our God.

**We don't know the power of our God because we do not want to believe he works in suffering**

Listen to me, this one is especially important to me as your pastor. God has not promised that his power will give you relief FROM suffering. Sometimes he DOES. Sometimes He cures cancer, changes the heart of a wayward spouse or child, sometimes He says YES to your prayer. We need to pray prayers big enough only God can answer. I believe that. But, sometimes His great power is not directed to you to alleviate your suffering but to strengthen you IN your suffering. And HE gets glory in your suffering. Some of you are going to

get sick and stay sick until you die. I hate that is true. And if we believe that our death is DEFEAT - Then we will fear death. If we believe death is the END, the GREAT finality of all things - then we'll only believe in God's power IF God spares us from suffering and if He spares us from death. But friends there is a reality in front of us - 100% of humans die. What we need is a victory so powerful we can endure suffering with joy and can face death with courage & hope. And if I believe in God's power, then I know what this same Apostle Paul wrote to the corinthian church:

**Death has been swallowed up in victory. -- 1 Corinthians 15:54**

So as we pray for God to CURE sickness we need to pray KNOWING the victory we have in Jesus. As Jonathan Evans preached at the funeral of his mother who died of cancer - He said God reminded him that just because he didn't answer his prayer his way doesn't mean he didn't answer his prayer anyway. He said God reminded him that because of Jesus' RESURRECTION - and because his mom believed in it - Either she was going to live OR she was going to live. That is the hope of our calling. That is the inheritance of the saints. That is the working of his immeasurable power towards us who believe.

May we know and walk in the power of God Mercy Church