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Ephesians 1:19 – 21
The Power of the Resurrection

We're continuing in our study of the book of Ephesians. I took a break from Ephesians last week and talked about the sufficiency of grace. We looked at the reality that grace is more than what God allows you to possess as yours, but what God invites you into as His – specifically a death that you couldn't possibly die, and a life that you couldn't possibly live. And we discussed how He desires to help us to know the reality and sufficiency of what He has done, and not only the blessings that He can do. But we'll jump back into Ephesians this week and try to pick up where we left off.

And where we left off is right in the middle of a prayer that Paul is recording for the church of Ephesus. He's telling them how he prays for them. If you'll recall, the prayer begins in verse 17 with Paul asking God to grant the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the true knowledge of Him. And we spent a week talking about the reality that nothing of Christ's will is accomplished without Christ's mind working in Christ's body. So Paul prays for that mind, the very spirit of God, to bring them to His view, His reality, His understanding, comprehension of all things.

Then we spent a week talking about the next part of the prayer which deals with the hope or expectation of God's calling. And that had to do with first defining what God's calling was and was not, and then getting into whether or not we had the same expectation of where this goes as He does. Whether we are willing to give Him His inheritance IN the saints.

Now the prayer continues. Lets just read the next few verses and then we'll break it down a bit.

Eph 1:19 and what *is* the exceeding greatness of His power toward (into, in, unto) us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power **20** which 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 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.

Again, this is part of the prayer that he started in verse 17, so this is all part of what Paul is desiring that the Spirit of God make real to the human heart. This isn't something that he is desiring that they see with their natural eyes or experience in the flesh. This is something that Paul is desiring the spirit of wisdom and revelation to make a reality through the opening of the eyes of the heart.

And that might be a little strange to hear because he's asking God that the Spirit cause them to know God's mighty power. Unfortunately, so many of us are only familiar with the word "power" in the context of what I might call the outward power of God. In other words, when we think power, we think of parting seas, healing lepers, and calling down fire from heaven. Power manifested in the natural arena.

Well, even though those things are certainly manifestations of the power of God, I'd like to suggest to you that such things are far less of a demonstration of the power of God than the power that Paul is speaking of here. What Paul is describing here is not the power of God that works a temporary miracle in the natural realm, but the power of God that works a permanent transformation and recreation of the human soul. Here is speaking of the power of the resurrection that works in the soul.

And that is why he says "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,". It is this resurrection power that is now working in us, bringing us out of death, making us alive together, raising us together, and seating us together in Christ. And that is what he goes on to describe in chapter 2. We're getting ahead of ourselves, but I want you to see that Paul isn't describing a resurrection power that only Jesus experiences. On the contrary, it is the power of Christ's resurrection that now works in us.

Eph 2:4 But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, **5** even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), **6** and raised *us* up together, and made *us* sit together in the heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus,

So again, we're dealing with the word "power"...but not in the context of outward signs and wonders here. We're dealing with the word power in the context of something that is actually a far greater manifestation of power – Christ, the resurrection and the life, working in the soul of man.

And this is the nature and reality of power that Paul speaks of in so many other Scriptures. Let me just show you a few.

Rom 15:13 Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in expectation by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Gal 3:5 Therefore He who supplies the Spirit to you and works power in you, *does He do it* by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?

1Co 1:18 For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

Eph 3:20 Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us,

Eph 3:16 that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might (Lit. "power") through His Spirit in the inner man, **17** that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love,

Phi 3:10 that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death,

Col. 1:10...increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might (Lit "power"), according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy;

Col 1:29 To this *end* I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily.

2Pe 1:3 as His divine power has given to us all things that *pertain* to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue,

I always like to quote a handful of Scriptures when we're dealing with a verse like this both to show you that Paul deals with this elsewhere, and also to demonstrate that I'm not taking an isolated verse out of context. Here we have many other Scriptures that describe the inward power of the resurrection working in the soul of the believer. And contrary to outward demonstrations of power in the natural arena (which are good, and kind, and exciting), **this inward working of power is the power that He works in us to conform us to His image.** And that is, in my opinion, a far greater miracle than healing a leper.

You don't have to choose between the two. They are both the power of God. But one of my points is that it seems that **so many have never considered the inward working of the power of the resurrection working the reality of His cross in the human soul.** I'll never forget once when I was doing some teaching in a group out of this area one time, and it became more and more apparent that so many, with whom I was speaking, had never thought about the power of the cross now working in the heart. The more I shared, and the more questions I got, it became uncomfortably clear that the cross was a past historical event, and not a present indwelling work. The resurrection was a recorded experience of Jesus, and not the power that currently is to work in the soul of all who desire to grow up in Him. And I didn't know how to work with that.

And I'm afraid that it is that way with many of us. This is a paradigm shift for many Christians. Most, it seems, understand the power of God working outwardly through people in one way or another. Preaching, teaching, helping, healing, miracles, discipline, etc. But these things, if they really have anything to do with God, must be the outworking of what is the inward power that works in us by faith. We'll speak more on that in a moment.

But the power of the resurrection is a Person that works in your soul to conform you to His image. And that is through the working of the cross in you. It is through, as Philippians 3:20 says, the "working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself." These "all things" are not outward things. These are the things in us that disallow His Life to reign and rule in and through us. These are the places where we are in disobedience to Him.

And when I say disobedience, I am not talking about what we do, I'm talking about what we are. God is working in us inwardly to cause us to become obedient, that is to line up with, conform to, come into accord with, agreement with, what is the mind of Christ. Wherever we are contrary to that mind, we will live and act in disobedience. Because, again, disobedience is not just a behavior, it is the adamic man and mind behind the behavior.

And so Paul, in 2nd Corinthians, talks about God warring against such things in us with power

2Co 10:4 For the weapons of our warfare *are* not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, **5** casting down arguments and every high thing

that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, [6](#) and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled.

Do you see where the power is working? Do you see where the war is taking place? Strongholds of the mind. Disagreement in the soul. High things that have risen up against the true knowledge of God. And what is God doing about them? He is bringing these things into conformity to His death. He is, through the power of the resurrection, taking all things in us captive to the obedience of Christ. He is **punishing or destroying everything in us that is contrary to the life that is in us. And because He is our life, everything that lives, thinks, feels, acts contrary to that is an enemy that must be put under His feet.** Everything contrary is a vain imagination.

And every vain imagination stands as an idol in our heart. **Brothers and sisters, if you can hear this without getting offended, we don't just believe lies, we were born contrary to Truth and so we are a lie.** Our thoughts are lies, our desires, our aspirations, understanding. They are the idols to which we bow in a land that has been given to Christ.

Let me read you a quote from a T. Austin-Sparks book

"Man has not only believed and accepted a lie; **but it has entered into his constitution, and he is a deceived and darkened soul. Of himself he neither knows, nor is capable of knowing or being, the truth.** 'the heart is deceitful above all things, and it is exceedingly corrupt; who can know it' (Jer. 17.9)...[Man] has accepted the lie, made his bid for supremacy, enthroned his reason in independence, and was taken charge of by the lie....Man believes that he is all the time improving, when, as a matter of fact, there is no moral elevation corresponding to the intellectual development....mankind is riding a lie in the form of a tiger which will tear him to pieces. But the strength of the lie lies in the fact that man does not recognize it, he is blind and in the dark as to its nature and source".

We have become that nature and that source. Certainly, the devil got that ball rolling in the garden. But we have become, by nature, contrary to the truth. And so when Paul describes the strongholds of our mind, he is not just referencing places where demons have deceived you. He is describing the deception that you started with. You didn't really have to be deceived. **You and I started out in deception. And so falsehood reigns until Truth is revealed.** And when truth is revealed, every enemy of the truth is punished and taken captive.

That doesn't mean that He spanks you for bad behavior. That means He is working death in you to all that stands in the way of His life. It means He is putting away from your heart what He has already put away from His sight. This is the power of the resurrection. And you'll notice it is the power of this resurrection that works death, destroys, punishes, takes captive, tears down, everything in us that is contrary to Him. Look at how Paul describes this in Philippians chapter 3.

Phi 3:10 that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death,

It is the power of His resurrection that causes us to know the fellowship of His sufferings and the conformity to His death. These aren't your sufferings for Him.

This isn't your death. These are His sufferings and death, the putting away of the old man, that are working in you by the power of the resurrection. You see, this is a far greater demonstration of power than God setting a mountain on fire or making a donkey talk. This is taking a carnal, self-centered, fallen, deceived, adamic human...and working in them in such a way that they can actually be conformed to the image of the eternal Son of God. That Christ might actually be formed in them.

I'd call that power. Paul calls that power. Paul, in our verse this morning, calls that the very power that worked in Christ when God raised Him out of death and seated Him in the heavens. And it is now the power that works in us bringing us out of death and causes us to dwell with Him in heavenly places.

Sometimes I fear we long more to be the vehicle of God's power than we do to be the recipient of God's power. In other words, we want to be used of God in power, but we resist being crucified, buried, and raised by the power that God wrought in Christ. We'd rather operate in it than be changed by it. And perhaps that is why I missed the reality of the list of Scriptures I read above for so many years.

Sometimes, like in Galatians chapter 3, I believe it is even mistranslated to represent our desires. Most Bible's read like this in verse 5

Gal 3:5 Therefore He who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you, *does He do it* by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?

The Greek reads:

Gal 3:5 Therefore He who supplies the Spirit to you and works power in you, *does He do it* by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?

So God is desiring not just to work power through you, but to work the power of His resurrection life in you. He desires to appear in you, and not just to or through you. And you'll find in the types and shadows of the Old Covenant, that that is where the Israelites generally encountered the power of God. They encountered the power of God in His temple.

Not very often do you find God displaying His power and glory in Billy's back yard or on Susie's front porch. Where do you find his appearing, glory, power displayed in the old covenant? You find Him glorifying His temple. You find Him displaying His power in His temple. You find Him working death on an altar in His temple. You find Him revealing Himself in His temple.

What's my point? My point is that you are the fulfillment of that temple. "Do you not know that you are the temple of God? Paul asks. **He's not just trying to glorify planet earth. He's seeking to display Himself, work His death, manifest His life in the temple that you and I have become.** Listen to this, though God can be glorified in the natural creation, He is first and foremost glorified in His church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all and all. God is no longer glorifying buildings. Man does that when we don't realize that His temple is now the human soul.

In Ephesians 2:21 and 22 Paul says that we are being "fitted together, growing into a holy temple in the Lord, 22 in whom you also are being built together for a

dwelling place of God in the Spirit.” So we being God’s temple are the place where He is working death and manifesting life.

And you’ll notice in our verses today that this “exceedingly great power” works in those who believe. Now this word believe is the same as the Greek word faith. Many of you have heard me say this, but there is no distinction between the word faith and the word believe in Greek. Same exact word. Why is that significant? Well, its significant to me because everything that God has finished in Christ works in us by faith, and not by intellectual agreement. And the power that Paul is describing here is no exception.

Faith is the mind of Christ working in us. Faith is not anything you think or believe. Its nothing the natural mind has or can do. Faith is the when God’s reality, God’s view, God’s truth is given to your soul through the Spirit’s revealing. Remember, **God doesn’t have opinions. God simply knows reality. We have opinions. Opinions are what men have when we don’t know the truth. God has never once had an opinion about anything. God simply has a full view of reality. And when that view of reality works in our soul by His Spirit, then you and I have come to something of faith.** Faith is His view of reality as it is in Christ. Faith sees a finished work.

And so THAT is why all things that He has done become experienced and real in us by faith. Faith is the evidence of what is unseen. Why? Because all that He has done and has given and has worked through the cross is ALREADY a reality as He knows it. The only problem is not that we lack something, but we lack that faith that can walk in, abide in, experience, and know as we are known. So faith is like the eyeball of the spiritual man. **It is God’s eyeball working in your heart. It sees what He sees, accesses what He has given, abides in what is real, knows what is true.** And that is why we are to live by faith and not by sight. Sight is our perception of natural reality. Faith is God’s perception of spiritual reality granted to you.

And so this verse says that this exceedingly great power works in us who have faith (believe). That is very much like Paul saying elsewhere that righteousness works in us by faith. Or in another place, love works in us by faith. Or in another, ministry works through us by faith. Or in another, grace is accessed by faith. And still another, Christ dwells in our hearts by faith. None of that has anything to do with a belief system. It has to do with beholding, knowing, and experiencing what is real.

Faith doesn’t see a fairytale. Faith doesn’t see Never-never land. Faith sees the power of the resurrection. Faith discovers God’s finished work. Faith comes to know a death working in you, a burial putting away would could never stand in God’s sight, and a Christ that has become the life of all who now live in God’s sight. **And so you could say that this power is in and for every born again believer. But it is the experience and reality of only those who are growing in faith.**

Lastly, I want to just deal with this last phrase in verse 21 where Paul says “not only in this age but also in that which is coming.” Just briefly, I’ll just share my opinion about what this means. Most commentators, I am sure, take this to mean – not only in this life, but in the afterlife. Or not only on earth, but in heaven. And I suppose that is possible. And I also believe that it is nothing to argue over.

But because of how the New Testament uses the word “age” so often as not a reference to earth or life, but rather to the Old Covenant age verses the eternal age

of the New Covenant, I take this verse to be a reference to that. Paul, and his contemporaries lived in a unique time period where the Old Covenant age was passing away before their eyes. The way in which God had dealt in covenant with humans since Abraham was obliterated in God's sight by the cross, and was about to be obliterated in man's sight, in the natural, by the Romans. My personal belief is that Paul is reassuring all believers that, even though that age is passing away, this reality, this power that works in us by faith, will forever stand.

Very often you will find the word "age" or "ages" in the New Testament referring to the Old Covenant era that had come to an end in Christ, and was coming to a manifest end in the earth. Look, for instance at the following verses.

1Co 2:8 which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

1Co 10:11 Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.

Heb 9:26 He then would have had to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now, once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.

Eph 3:5 which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets:

Eph 3:9 and to make all see what *is* the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ; **10** to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly

Col 1:26 the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints.

It is my conviction that Paul knew very certainly what Jesus Himself had spoken of – namely, that everything of the age of the flesh, the law, the letter, the temple, the natural realm and its types and shadows of relationship with God, were coming to a catastrophic end. The fact of the matter was that they came to a catastrophic end in the person of Christ. He put away that age. But since He came to His own and His own would not receive Him, since He offered them a Rock to fall on and they would not fall and be broken together, that Rock came crashing down on them and ground them to powder.

But nevertheless...even though that age, and all former ages, had passed away, this exceeding great power of the resurrection would be the power that God worked in the souls of those who believed forever and without end. That's my opinion of that last phrase. Take it or leave it. Amen