

Far Above All

Ephesians 1:18-23

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. (Ephesians 1:18-23)

Folks, consider . . . these are truly powerful words. And they are calling you and me to a higher level of faith and understanding, both about who God is, and about all that we should be experiencing in our relationship with Him. Here, verse 18 speaks of the riches of his glorious inheritance. And verse 19 speaks about the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might.

A question . . . do these words get you excited or do you simply read them and accept them but not much more.

An unfortunate reality that I see in our relationship with God is that He is only ever as big and only ever as powerful as our rational minds allow Him to be. And it is ever-so difficult to push past those barriers on into higher realms like those spoken about here in these words.

And as a result, our daily Christian experience continues to languish in the same doldrums as those expressed by the late Jewish Rabbi Joshua Heschel. He said, "Our religion, (his, the Jewish faith), is often dull, a religiosity in which faith is completely replaced by creed, worship by discipline, love by habit, and faith becomes an heirloom rather than a living fountain."

Folks, those are words from someone who does not believe in Christ, but are they not similar to the struggles we ourselves have with our own Christian faith? But it should not, it must not, be allowed to continue in this way. Our God truly is an awesome God, able to be and to do

20 . . . exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us. (Ephesians 3:20-21)

Last week, at the close of our message, we read a passage from Philippians 2, that has similar words to these here in Ephesians 1. Listen!

5 Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, 6 who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, 7 but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. 9 Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, 10 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, 11 and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.
(Philippians 2:5-11)

May we, this day, commit ourselves to somehow moving on past the self-imposed limits of our rational thoughts and, actually, by faith, allow our minds to be “renewed” and “transformed” so that we can really believe these truths!

So then, think with me for while . . . I have said to you in the past that my usual manner of thinking through things is most often very “literal” and employs a lot of “visual” imagery within my thoughts. And the same is true as I attempt to grasp the meaning of these words about God the Father and about the Lord Jesus.

And no, we can't, with our ordinary minds, relate personally to such “lofty” matters as these, but thanks be to God, with the Holy Spirit dwelling within us, we can at least begin to discern the truth.

Here, simply put, we are told that Jesus, who was forevermore “God”, Creator and Sustainer of all things that exist, divested Himself of His heavenly position to also become forevermore an ordinary “man”, joining together, body, soul and spirit that which is infinitely perfect and holy with that which is wretchedly imperfect. And He did that solely for the purpose of saving you and me from our own self-inflicted destruction.

We can, to some extent, imagine the daily life that Jesus experienced while He walked among us, because it was probably somewhat similar to our own. And to some degree, we can imagine the horrible death He suffered. But that is about as far as our minds will take us, because for Him, the next step was His resurrection and then His return to His “Kingly” position of power at the right hand of God the Father.

But by those things that He did as He became a man, Jesus became forevermore very different from whom He was before. He is now no longer only an eternal "Spirit". He is now also forevermore in the form of "resurrected man". And no, we can't imagine exactly what that means or what that looks like, "God Almighty" and "resurrected man" in one being, but that is the image that we are given here in these words. Listen again, Ephesians 1,

20 that he (God the Father) 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. (Ephesians 1:20-23)

Within these words, we are able to imagine and to visualize Jesus, our Lord and King, seated at the right hand of God the Father and reigning over all heaven and earth. But as our minds imagine those thrones, we are not able to visualize God the Father or the Holy Spirit, because they truly are Spirit, invisible to our imagination.

I confess that I don't know all the reasons why God has chosen to give us this imagery and this assurance of His power and might, but I believe that it has to do with the weakness within our souls that I spoke about a few moments ago, our limitations of only being able to go to the extent that our rational mind will take us.

But here, God seems to be going all out to make us understand and believe that He truly is an awesome God, with power and might that is far and above all that we can ever think or imagine, power and might that is fully able to meet any and every circumstance of our life.

And that His Son, the Lord Jesus, is just as mighty and just as powerful as God the Father; and He is right now seated on His throne . . . verse 21

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.
(Ephesians 3:21)

And that He

20 . . . is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, (Ephesians 3:20)

And unless we are able to truly accept and believe this to be true, that Christ in us is more powerful than the continual onslaught of the world, the flesh and the devil, then we

will be forever relegated to living the weak and defeated lives that we so often experience.

And may I again take a few moments to further address these words of verse 21! Here, we are told that God's power is

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.

(Ephesians 3:21)

These words are addressing a misconception that I observe at work among not only the people of the secular world and in their secular religions, but also just as strongly at work within our own Christian religion; the misconception that within our struggles each day, there are two powerful and equal forces at work within our souls, that of good and that of evil. And that each side of the conflict is led by its champion, the good side being led by God the Father and His Son the Lord Jesus, the other side these dominions and powers spoken about here being led by satan and his demonic forces.

While that belief might seem correct, it is actually completely incorrect, completely wrong. The part that makes it completely wrong is that, on the authority of these words before us today, both sides are not "equal". Not even close!

But with that being said, we must also acknowledge that God really has given that other side, the "evil" side, a certain defined measure of dominion, power and control in the common matters of this world. They really are among us and they really do have some freedoms to tempt us and to make our lives miserable.

I'm reminded of the time there in the wilderness when Jesus was tempted by satan. One of the temptations was for positions of power and authority, satan offering to grant Jesus a powerful position. Listen, these words from Matthew 4 . . .

8 Again, the devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. 9 And he said to Him, "All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me." 10 Then Jesus said to him, "Away with you, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve.' " 11 Then the devil left Him, and behold, angels came and ministered to Him. (Matthew 4:8-11)

Note two things within these words . . . first that Jesus did not dispute that satan had the power and authority to give Him all the things of this world. Why would that be so? Again, it is because God the Father truly has given satan certain power and authority here on the earth. It is real and it is powerful, and it dominates much of all that takes

place in the daily lives of all the people on the earth, including all of the elements of nature, and all of the affairs of men, power, corruption, crime, wars, and on and on. And satan's power also includes all of the positions of power that now exist, many of our government leaders, our financial systems, our medical care systems and on and on. Folks, simply put, satan and his demons really do have a lot of power and control on this earth.

But again, are they in any manner or form equal to God and to His power and might and authority? No! Emphatically no! Note verse 10 of Matthew 4 . . .

10 Then Jesus said to him, "Away with you, Satan! (Matthew 4:10)

Here, with just a "flick of His tongue", Jesus cast satan aside like the "flea" that he is. And you will recall that Jesus did that on another occasion also, the time when Peter was trying to talk Him out of being crucified. There too, Jesus simply spoke, "get thee behind me satan". And satan had to obey.

So again, though satan and his demons are powerful, they are not equal to God, not in any sense of the word.

Unfortunately, yes, there are many occasions when we give in to our fears and misconceptions and, by doing that, we allow the demonic world to have power they really don't possess. But that is only true because we allow it or even invite it to be true. But again, the real truth is the forces of evil are never equal to or more powerful than God. All of the powers and principalities and forces of this world, whether human or inhuman, are all simple, finite, created beings, wretchedly small and insignificant when compared to God. It is just as we read here in today's text . . .

20 that he (God the Father) 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. (Ephesians 1:20-23)

So then, what shall we do with these things that God has taught us from these words today? What is our "precept" for today? It is this!

Yes, we must recognize that there really is an enemy out there, and that he and his demons are not only powerful, they are crafty and have ways of tempting us that often catch us by surprise and carry us away into places and behaviors where we should not go.

And unfortunately for us, those demons work within the hearts and minds of the people all around us, some of whom we have come to sincerely trust, influencing them to do and to think in ways that are intended to carry us into those places and into those behaviors where we don't belong.

But those people and those evil forces are limited and they can be resisted. All that we have to do is "draw near to God and He will draw near to us", and the demons will flee. Again, we must be convinced by these words that there really is no real comparison of the might and the power of God with that of man, or with that of the demonic realm. For our part, there is only one condition that must first be met. We must first give our heart, soul, mind and strength to Christ. Once we have done that, and we are in Him, our protection and our provision is secure.

In practical, daily, real-life terms, what these scriptures mean to you and me is that Jesus is not only "head" over all that we do in this church, He is also intimately and powerfully involved in the common details of our daily involvements, in our thoughts, in our behaviors, in our comfort, in our provision, in everything that will take place this day. Praise be to God! Those words again . . .

20 that he (God the Father) 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. (Ephesians 1:20-23)

Philippians 2,

9 Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, 10 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, 11 and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:9-11)