

April 16, 2017

The incredible greatness of God's power for us Ephesians 1:15-23

Reflection: The incredible greatness of God's power ... for us (Ephesians 1:19-20)

"I pray that you will understand the incredible greatness of God's power for us who believe him. This is the same mighty power that raised Christ from the dead and seated him in the place of honor at God's right hand in the heavenly realms."

On the one hand, the resurrection of Jesus was an historical event (yes, there is plenty of evidence that supports this – talk with me if you have questions). There have been dozens, hundreds, thousands, millions, billions of significant historical events, but ...

On the other hand, the resurrection of Jesus is an historical event to **end** all historical events: the old order of things, in which death ultimately had the last say, was over.

And, on yet another hand(!), the resurrection of Jesus is an historical event that **begins** a whole new reality. Paul writes:

Read Ephesians 1:3-23

Do you hear what we just read?

- *Even before he made the world, God loved us and chose us in Christ to be holy and without fault in his eyes.* God created us, in His image, to be His chosen people. He created us to be those whom He would walk, talk, and share with ... and whom He has entrusted the wise stewardship of His creation to.
- *God decided in advance to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ.* God still loves us and wants to restore us to the open, free relationship with which he created us in the beginning.
- *He is so rich in kindness and grace that he purchased our freedom with the blood of his Son and forgave our sins.* Through the love and death of Jesus, our sin is forgiven, our exile has ended, and that perfect relationship has been restored (historical fact!)
- *Through his mighty power, God raised Christ from the dead and seated him in the place of honor at God's right hand in the heavenly realms.* If the crucifixion shows the depths of God's love for us and His creation, the resurrection shows the unlimited extent of God's power to overcome all evil, sin, and death.
- *This is the incredible greatness of God's power for us who believe him: and when you believed in Christ, he identified you as his own by giving you the Holy Spirit, whom he promised long ago.* This same power is now in us!

- *God has put all things under the authority of Christ and has made him head over all things for the benefit of us, the church. And we, the church, are his body, made full and complete by Christ, who fills all things everywhere with himself. We are the people of God, His chosen people, royal priests, a holy nation, God's very own possession, called out of the darkness into his wonderful light (1 Peter 2:9).*

Reflection: What comes next? (Ephesians 1:15-18)

We sometimes leave Easter as just an historical event. Isn't it great: Jesus died and rose again? I believe. Therefore, one day, some day, I go to heaven and live with Jesus.

But keep on reading in Ephesians (if you are using the reading guides you will be doing just that). Paul goes on to talk about how this new hope, new life, new power we have in Jesus can change our lives. He prays for us:

"Ever since I first heard of your strong faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for God's people everywhere, ¹⁶ I have not stopped thanking God for you. I pray for you constantly, ¹⁷ asking God, the glorious Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, to give you spiritual wisdom and insight so that you might grow in your knowledge of God. ¹⁸ I pray that your hearts will be flooded with light so that you can understand the confident hope he has given to those he called—his holy people who are his rich and glorious inheritance."

He goes on to talk about what this means and gets downright practical about it, *"I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received"* (4:1):

- *"Be completely humble and gentle (4:2)*
- *"Be patient, bearing with one another in love (4:2)*
- *"Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace" (4:3)*
- *"Speak the truth in love so we grow to become the mature body of Christ" (4:15)*
- *"Put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness" (4:24)*

That's a good start, but what does it mean? Ephesians 4:25-5:4 (The Message):

"No more lies, no more pretense. Tell your neighbour the truth ... Don't stay angry. Don't go to bed angry. Don't give the Devil that kind of foothold in your life. Did you use to make ends meet by stealing? Well, no more! Get an honest job so that you can help others who can't work. Watch the way you talk. Let nothing foul or dirty come out of your mouth. Say only what helps, each word a gift ... Make a clean break with all cutting, backbiting, profane talk. Be gentle with one another, sensitive. Forgive one another as quickly and thoroughly as God in Christ forgave you.

"Don't allow love to turn into lust, setting off a downhill slide into sexual promiscuity, filthy practices, or bullying greed. Though some tongues just love the taste of gossip, those who

follow Jesus have better uses for language than that. Don't talk dirty or silly. That kind of talk doesn't fit our style. Thanksgiving is our dialect.

"Watch what God does, and then you do it, like children who learn proper behaviour from their parents. Mostly what God does is love you. Keep company with him and learn a life of love. Observe how Christ loved us ... He didn't love in order to get something from us but to give everything of himself to us. Love like that."

Peter writes: *"You are a chosen people. You are royal priests, a holy nation, God's very own possession. **As a result, you can show others the goodness of God,** for he called you out of the darkness into his wonderful light."*

Easter is all about *"the incredible greatness of God's power for us who believe him."* But it's not a love and power that we keep to ourselves. It's a love we share with a broken, hurting world around us.

We look at our world – this year more than ever – and we wonder. And we worry. And we could lose hope. And we could get discouraged. And we could be afraid. And we could see only darkness.

But Christ is risen from the dead! *"This same mighty power that raised Christ from the dead and seated him in the place of honour at God's right hand in the heavenly realms"* is within us, through His Spirit.

As God tells Joshua (Joshua 1:6-9): *"Be strong and courageous, I will not fail you or abandon you ... Do not be afraid or discouraged. For the Lord your God is with you wherever you go."* This is the confidence in which we live. For two thousand years, the people of God have not just survived ... we have thrived. We have brought light into darkness. We have brought hope into despair. We have brought justice into evil. We have brought love into hate. We have brought forgiveness and mercy into anger and revenge. We have brought the love of Jesus, the power of Jesus into places where it seemed like it would be crushed, and Jesus has overcome it all.

So ...

- Don't lose hope: pray ... and find your hope in Jesus.
- Don't allow hatred or anger to overcome you ... love, as Jesus has loved you.
- Don't be discouraged ... find your identity in Jesus
- Don't give up on justice ... find your passion for truth in Jesus
- Don't be afraid ... find your strength in Jesus.

"Take heart," Jesus says, *"because I have overcome the world"* (John 16:33).