

The Expectation of Power

Eph 1:15-23

Last time we looked at the Paul's prayer for the Ephesians – that they may have opened eyes to see the reality of spiritual things. Things that will change our perception of God, of the world and of ourselves and will shape our lives. That's my prayer for us as a church. We looked at the meaning of most of these things:

- the hope to which He has called us
- the riches of His glorious inheritance
- His incomparably great power to those of us who believe.

Our task this evening as we come around the Lord's table is to look at the final one of the three. *I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know his incomparably great power for us who believe.*

It's quite an important theme to look at as we often think of power in human terms and if that's the case, we see that we are ordinary people. By the world's standards we have limited power. We think about how our rights as Christians are being eroded in our land and it makes us feel we don't have much power. We suffer the stresses of life and the ailments of human beings and we don't feel we have much power.

But think. Go back to chapter 1 verse 13 and we find that we have been sealed with the promised Holy Spirit. We have Him in us. God indwells me and He indwells you. And Paul says *I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know his incomparably great power for us who believe.*

As you know we have a caravan. It's a touring caravan. It's not like the old fashioned ones. It has full electrics. It can be hooked up to the mains or it can work on it's own battery. There's a huge difference to what we can do when it's connected to the mains. Much more things will work and everything works better. Why? Because mains electricity has much more power available.

However, there's also a difference between having the power and using it. If we want to use our mains devices in the caravan, they will never work unless we switch them on!

I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know his incomparably great power for us who believe. Once we know and understand the power that's available then we will have an understanding what can be done with it – if we are prepared to actually use it.

There's two things, knowing what we have, and knowing how to use it.

So what is the power of God all about? You'll probably know that the Greek word used in the NT for power is *dunamis*. In one sense it is a word of utter dramatic power – it's where we get the word dynamite from. On the other hand, we know that power is something that, when placed in skilful hands can be hugely beneficial. The whole of our society is based on how we have harnessed the power of creation to give ourselves heat, light, the power to move ourselves around, to use amazing devices.

But *dunamis* is more than just a display of power in a physical sense, but it is also used to describe political power – the power to assert authority over someone else. On it's lowest level, it's just the ability to do something. We'll see all these in this passage.

I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know his incomparably great power for us who believe. So what is the incomparably great power of God. Three things are suggested here, particularly in relation to Christ.

Creative Power

We God's power exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead. In terms of the impossible in creation, raising someone from death represents a massive authority over creation. Jesus was good and dead – in human terms it was absolutely irretrievable. He could not have survived such injuries. Yet, we see the power of God over creation in raising Him. The easiest definition of a miracle is something that in human terms goes against all the laws of nature. Even with modern technology, Jesus' life was irretrievable. Yet God raise Him from death. Why? Because He has the power. He's the Creator. He can.

And Paul prays that the eyes of our heart may be opened to know that incomparable power. It's not a case of seeing, it's a case of knowing the power, experiencing the power living the power. The God of miracles of 2000 years ago is the God of miracles now. But we must realise that. And so often we don't. We let the problems get on top of us and we forget the power. But remember, it's not just a case of knowing about, but knowing that it's there, believing it's there – and asking God to switch it on!

But we see from this passage another kind of power which helps us to understand the first more deeply.

Political Power

I use political in the broadest sense. God has seated Jesus at His right hand in the heavenly realms and placed all things under his feet. God's power over creation extends to all creation and the death, resurrection and exaltation of Jesus places Him in authority over all earthly and heavenly power. His authority is not just over creation, but over the human race and all other spiritual beings and heavenly realms.

In relation to the human race, He has the power to forgive sins. He is mighty to save. He has the power to transform human beings, to make them what God intends them to be. One day everything will be brought under His feet. He's that powerful. He changes lives. And Paul says that they eyes of our heart may be opened to this power. Because once we are we will no longer be afraid to speak out about it and share it. We will no longer need to be apologising for who we are. We have a Saviour who has the power to save, to change lives. Lord, open our eyes that we may truly believe it. Please switch on the lights and let your power flow in our community!

Delegated Power

But the power Jesus has isn't just for Him. God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church. That power flows through us by His Spirit. And it makes a difference:

Eph 3:16 I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, 17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, 18 may have power, together with

all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, 19 and to know this love that surpasses knowledge--that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

The power in us allows us to grasp just what God is like. It takes us full circle to where we were last time. The power of God in us allows us to be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. But it gets better:

Eph 6:10 Be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power. And we are taken into how the power of God is all about armour and winning the spiritual battle of life. We are equipped spiritually for everything – defensively and offensively.

And as we come to the table together this evening, all this power is ours in Christ. It isn't a fable, it isn't a picture. It's the real deal, real power. Why is it that we always hear about it happening in another church, another town, another land. We hear the stories of lives changed, people healed, miraculous happenings, the dead raised. Why doesn't it happen here.

Anchoring all this and helping us to understand it is one word: "grace" because it is the word that anchors the letter to the Ephesians. All this isn't a state we achieve. It isn't for advanced Christians, there isn't a level of maturity we have to reach or a standard of holiness. In fact without it, we don't get anywhere in terms of growth and holiness.

Let me read it again with some emphasis: *I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may **give you** the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. 18 I pray also that the eyes of your heart **may be enlightened** in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, 19 and his incomparably great power for us who believe.*

It's in the purview of God to give and He gives is freely. We need to pray Paul's prayer for ourselves and one another. May these words jump from Scripture by the Spirit of God that we may have the understanding and the power to be the people of God, and start to see that power in action in our church and community rather than letting the world drive us. It can happen, it will happen, it must happen, if Felixstowe and Walton is going to experience the glory of God.