

EPHESIANS 1:19a
The Wonderful Work of Salvation
Message 29, December 12, 1999

INTRO: Power! What do you think of when you think of power? To my mind comes the demonstration of the Canadian Air Force, F18 fighter jet. Almost every air show will somewhere in its program display the power of the F18. It is an incredible machine! I remember the F18 coming into the airport at my home-town, Vanderhoof, in British Columbia. In one of the events the sleek, powerful jet came in and it was going slow, the sound was that of a dull rumble. The pilot kept just enough power on to keep the jet in the air. The back end hung low and it looked as if in a moment it would fall to the ground. It was one lame looking jet. When it came to center field, right in front of the audience the pilot torqued the jet engines, and turned the nose of that jet straight up into heaven and in a moment disappeared from sight. The way he pointed that nose up at low speed would stall almost any aircraft. But when he turned on the power, the sound alone was enough to inspire awe, nevermind the burst of speed as it shot up.

And when I think of all that power and then turn to Ephesians 1:19-21 I can only say, "You ain't seen nothin' yet!" Paul prayed continually for these Ephesians that the God of the Lord Jesus Christ would give to them the spirit of wisdom and revelation, that the eyes of their understanding might be enlightened that they might have their dianoia, or minds enlightened. And when their eyes were enlightened he wished for them to get to fully understand three things. First, the hope of their calling. Second, what is the glory of the riches of God's inheritance in the saints. And now, last but certainly not least, he wanted them to know what is the exceeding greatness of God's power towards the believer.

3) The exceeding greatness of His power

This is now the third thing Paul wants the Ephesians to know. Notice the first word to describe this power, the word exceeding. It comes from the word *hyperballon*. Ballw means to throw. Huper, means over. So it is overthrowing power. Let me give you some English synonyms for this word: to go beyond, surpass, outdo,

extraordinary, outstanding, beyond measure and so on. Ephesians 3:19 speaks of the love of Christ which passes or surpasses knowledge. It is incomprehensible so it is called *hyperballon*.

That is the word exceeding. But notice another adjective that immediately follows, the word *greatness*; the exceeding greatness of His power. This is the word *megethos*. We get our word *mega* from this word. In 1 John 4:4 we have the comparative of this word and it says, "Greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world."

So we are dealing here with the mega overthrowing or surpassing power of God. The word for power is *dunamis*. It has often been observed that we get our word dynamite from this word. The word power has to do with ability. I wonder how many of you remember the old TD 9, International crawler tractor or cat, as we called it? My dad had one of those. I well remember when my dad would make new logging roads. We had a lot of Jack Pine timber and the Jack Pine has an entirely different root structure from the Spruce trees we are used to in this country. The Jack Pine has a tap root that goes straight down. The Spruce tree is designed more for wet ground and has its roots spread all over the surface of the ground. Well, our logging roads usually skirted the Jack Pine stumps. But sometimes a Pine stump had to be removed and the TD 9 simply did not have the *dunamis* (ability) to uproot the bigger Pine stumps. As children, these big pine stumps always created a real treat.

Stored underneath our sawmill was a wooden box that held sticks of *dunamis*, I mean dynamite. Well, my dad would get the metal crow bar, a must in those days, and punch a hole about 2 inches in diameter

underneath the Pine stump. Then he would cut a length of fuse and place a dynamite cap on the end. Then, using a screwdriver he would puncture the top of a stick of dynamite and push the screwdriver into the soft material of the dynamite. Into this little hole he would push the dynamite cap. When the dynamite stick was ready he would drop it into the hole under the stump. Then he would warn everybody to dissapear. Under the TD 9 was a safe spot so off we'd go to hide. Then he would strike a match and light the fuse. Boy was that exciting road building. We would wait for about a minute or two and all of a sudden "Kabooooom!" Dirt and pieces of stump would fly all over the place. I tell you when I think of explosions I get a big bang out of the big bang theory. I never saw dynamite organize something beautiful. The stump would be all in dissaray. But the point here is that the dynamis had the ability to do what the TD 9 simply could not do.

I have seen the power of water. I have seen the power of wind. I have seen the power of fire, but I tell you there is no power like God's power. But there is something else we must realize. The Devil is compared with God in 1 John 4:4 in greatness. I think that the Devil is the greatest created power there is in all of God's creation. In comparison to man, he is like a whole box car of dynamite and man like a toothpick. I believe with all my heart that the Devil is so powerful that if he ever gains ownership of us, and he is owner of all who have sinned; then, with regard to our own ability or dunamis, we are hopelessly bound under his power. Amassing all of mankind against the Devil would not create enough power to set anyone free. You say, "I don't know if I believe that." Well, I'll tell you what; try to break the hold of sin in your life

by any dunamis you can find outside of God and you will come to agree with me.

So when we consider this verse, we must understand the power of God, the comparative power of the devil and the powerlessness of man. When we have observed those three matters, then perhaps we can begin to see why Paul lists this third thing he wants the Ephesians to know. And now I want you to notice something most precious. This exceeding great power of God is *towards us* who believe. Notice first that this power is from God towards a limited number of people. It is directed towards those who believe. It is available to the believer. It is not available to the unbeliever. The unbeliever will never come out of the clutches of Satan by his power.

Consider for instance the world's efforts to curb sexual deviation. The foolosophy of the world is that this can be done by education. I mentioned last message that education is not a cure all. Then observe what is happening from the world's education regarding this problem and observe that rather than curbing evil, they are pouring gas on the fire. No amount of education will educate people out of Satan's grasp. How foolish are we to think that man can out manage or out manipulate the Devil. He is a power so far above man that the sooner we realize our powerlessness the better off we are.

Now I think Paul is not reminding the Ephesians of God's power to save the unbeliever. But let us consider for a moment God's power in saving unbelievers, the only cure for Satan's power through sin (See Romans 1:16). Now the god of this world, the devil, blinds people's minds lest they understand the Gospel and come to salvation (2 Cor. 4:4). You see, the very instant a person recognizes himself

as sinful and hell-bound, and then hears the Gospel, that Christ died for him/her, and receives Christ as personal Saviour, that very instant the believer is taken from Satan's domain and placed in God's kingdom (Col. 1:13). As powerful as Satan is, in that moment of time he loses his vice-like grip of a person. How much power does it take to do that? Well, much more than you and I have and much more than the Devil and all his host of fallen angels can muster against God.

Now let me say further on the basis of our text that the moment I become a believer, God's power becomes available to me. And that leads us now to consider the real reason why Paul wanted the Ephesians to know of the exceeding greatness of God's power. You see, the text plainly tells us that he did not simply want them to know the exceeding greatness of God's power, he wanted them to know what this power was towards them. Now there is a difficulty in the text. It comes from the preposition *eis*, variously translated as , in us, or toward us, or for us. Martin Luther speaks of this power as being *seiner Kraft an uns*. My interpretation is that this power is ever emanating or flowing or radiating towards the believer. I believe further that this power must be understood and tapped into if it will do what God emits it for.

I have been told many times, in the discussion of the doctrine of once saved always safe, that we are kept by the power of God. That is true in so far as it goes. It is what I call a half truth. The claim comes out of 1 Peter 1:5 which says we are kept by the power of God through faith. The power of God is the energy force that keeps us but it comes to us through faith. There is the perfect balance; God's power, man's faith. If I want to be kept by the power of God I must tap into it by faith.

It is active faith that taps into the power of God. You see, the exceeding great power of God is ever emanating towards us, but it only becomes ours as we exercise faith.

1 John 5:4 says, "And this is the victory that has overcome the world - our faith." Revelation 12, which deals with the perpetual animosity of the Devil towards Israel and Jesus Christ and believers, shows us by what power believers in the tribulation overcome Satan. In verse 11 John writes, "And they overcame him (Satan) by the blood of the Lamb (Thus we sing, There is power in the blood), and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death." I think that our faith and the power of God must go hand in hand. Our faith must rest in the power of God (1 Cor. 2:4-5).

Now I would like to say a few things about the power of God. First, we need to experience the power of God in our personal lives. You see, in initial salvation, I am delivered from the penalty of salvation. But in ongoing salvation, which we call sanctification, we need the power of God to overcome the world, the flesh and the Devil. Sin exerts such tremendous power in our lives that only a greater power than ours can break it. So if we desire to be conformed to the image of God's Son, as we spoke of in last Sunday's message, then we will have to tap into the power of God by faith. 1 Cor. 1:18 tells us that the preaching of the cross is the power of God for the Christian. It is at the cross that sin is overcome, both its penalty and its power. The message of Christ crucified is the power and wisdom of God to us (1 Cor. 1:22-24). So the power of God is a crucial thing in overcoming sin in our personal lives.

Let me say further that if we would affect the lives of others, then we need the power of God. We need the power of God if we would affect our own children for salvation. How can we have a powerful impact on our children's lives if we live in powerlessness ourselves? And when we speak to others of salvation or when we direct church affairs, we need the power of God. Without the power of God we can say all the right things but there are no spiritual results.

I wonder sometimes why it is that so few people here are bringing new people to church? Why are there so few reports of conversions made by our church people? Are we failing as a church to equip believers for this? Are we failing to create a burden to reach out? Or are we failing to tap into the power of God? Is it perchance because we, like the Ephesians, do not know what is the exceeding greatness of His power towards us?

Let me share something from my own experience. It seems to me that God does not lightly grant His power to us. If I have a spiritual high for a week or a month, it does not yet assure me of God's power. God's power, like His grace, is free but it is not cheap. Also, fleshliness, selfishness and worldliness will zap the power of God and there we are working simply in our own puny bit of strength. And oh, how impotent, how powerless is the flesh to bring about spiritual results!

The Corinthians were loaded with carnality. Yet they had the audacity to consider themselves more spiritual than Paul! Did they ever have eloquent speakers! Could they rattle off a list of notes and sound so very spiritual. But the effects were oh so powerless. And so Paul,

when he wrote to them said this (1 Cor. 4:18-20).

CONCL: The third thing Paul wanted the Ephesians to know is what is the exceeding greatness of God's power towards them. So I ask you this morning, do you know what is the exceeding greatness of the power of God towards you? Are you interested in experiencing the power of God? First we need the spirit of wisdom and revelation which comes to us in the knowledge of God. We need this to have the eyes of our minds enlightened so that we might know what is the exceeding greatness of His power towards us.

As we begin to see what is the exceeding greatness of His power towards us, then we need to tap into that power by faith. Let us say you were to take in an exchange student from somewhere who had no experience with generated electrical power. And so he asks you about the wires on the wood poles and you explain that these wires conduct electrical power. This power is for (towards in our text) all things designed to be run by electrical power. And so when you get to your house you show this student an electrical skill saw. You show him the trigger switch and the blade and explain how it works and so he wants to try it and he presses the trigger and nothing happens. And so you explain that the electrical power is designed for this tool but the tool must be tapped into a power source outlet. Unless you tap into the electrical power, it cannot flow through the tool. And so you plug the saw into an outlet and now the saw comes to life when the trigger is pulled.

I suggest that when we understand what is the exceeding greatness of God's power towards us, the believer, then we must tap into it by faith (Mark 9:14-25).