

EPHESIANS 1:19b-20
The Wonderful Work of Salvation
Message 30, January 9, 2000

INTRO: Let us review what we have covered in Ephesians 1. Verses 1-2 give us the introduction to the letter. Verses 3-14 focus in on the God of our salvation and we looked at many things regarding salvation. But from verse 15 we have a shift of focus and our eyes are now on Paul, the thankful messenger of salvation. Paul is in the process of telling the Ephesians of his continual prayers for them and what he is praying for them. He desires that God would grant them the spirit of wisdom and revelation that their eyes might be enlightened that they might know three great things. First, what is the hope of their calling. Second, what are the riches of the glory of God's inheritance in the saints. And last, what is the exceeding greatness of God's power toward us, who believe.

I asked you in our last message what you think of when you think of power. I shared with you that my mind went to the Canadian Air Force fighter jet. But when Paul searches his mind for an illustration of God's power he turns to something much more powerful than a fighter jet. He will draw our attention to one of the greatest demonstrations of power ever seen by man, the resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ. I ask you, when does man stand more powerless than when death comes? Have you heard man's cries of anguish when death occurs? Have you seen the look of helplessness? And Paul says, "I want to show you the power of God. It is demonstrated in the resurrection and exaltation of Jesus Christ!" And so, to this topic we now give ourselves.

- 3) The exceeding greatness of His power
 - a) The illustration of God's power

Now I ask you, what does it take to raise someone from the dead? Well, I suppose we call it a miracle. A real miracle is an event that overrides natural law. For an airplane to defy the laws of gravity is not a miracle. It is a natural law that overrides another natural law. A miracle is contrary to all natural laws. When

death takes place the natural law of entropy denies a reversal of the state of disorder. Let us say a person has been dead for 1 hour. If we could reverse the state of disorder that has taken place in that hour we could resurrect that person.

Now there are two kinds of resurrection. The second kind is greater than the first. For the first kind, let us read Luke 7:11-17. In this kind of resurrection the state of disorder is reversed. And if this person died from sickness, that disorder is reversed as well because then he would die again in a short time.

When I looked for an illustration of power I used the Canadian Air Force fighter jet as an example. When Paul searched for an illustration he used the resurrection as an illustration. Now which example is the greater example? Remember again that power has to do with ability. Which ability is greater here. No doubt, if we had the ability to resurrect we would have much greater ability than we do in building jets. If we could resurrect we might not even need fighter jets!

But there is a second kind of resurrection. This is much greater than the first kind. The second kind of resurrection is the kind that took place when Jesus was resurrected. The young man who was resurrected at Nain died again. His body had not undergone the change that is required for the second kind of resurrection. When Jesus was raised from the dead, He received a resurrection body and He is alive today and will never die. His body is no longer subject to any of the laws of thermodynamics. The power

to resurrect and restore to the former healthful state is one thing. The power to resurrect and give a new body which is not subject to decay is a much greater power. That is what Paul is talking about here. This is the power which God exercised in Christ when He raised Him from the dead.

But not only did He exercise this power in raising Him from the dead but also when He seated Jesus Christ at His own right hand. First, God gave Jesus a position which all the forces of hell wanted to keep from Christ. But because of the perfect life of Jesus Christ, God had the right to exercise His power and exalt Christ to His own right hand. If Christ had committed one little sin, God would not have had the right to exalt Christ to His own right hand.

But, not only did He exalt Christ to His own right hand. He transported Christ from earth to heaven and Christ had no jet, space ship; he didn't even have a gas mask (Read Acts 1:9-11). Isn't that phenomenal? Now how far was Christ transported? Well Paul says He was seated at God's right hand in the heavenly places. This is in the third heaven beyond the stars of heaven. And how far is it to beyond the stars? Harold Wilmington writes, "Let us say the thickness of a sheet of paper represents the distance from the earth to the sun (some 93,000,000 miles)...To represent the nearest star 4 1/3 light years away) we would need 71-foot high stack of paper. To cover the diameter of our Milky Way Galaxy (100,000 Light Years) would require a 310-mile high stack of paper...To reach the edge of the known universe would demand a pile of paper sheets 31 million miles high!" Well, that was

written many years ago. Today scientists can see much farther than they could when Wilmington wrote these words.

Do you see what kind of power Paul is talking about in this passage? Now I wish to make us aware of something. Paul says it is this kind of power which is emanating towards us! I ask you this morning: What kind of power or ability does it take to live right? It is this kind of power that it takes to live right. Why is it we find ourselves incapable of living right? Because we simply do not have any ability to match the demand.

Now I would like to remind us again that Paul, in his prayers for the Ephesians wished for them to know three things. The third is this power which is ever emanating towards us, of which we need to avail ourselves. D. Martin Lloyd Jones asks why it is so important for us to know this power? He says it is twofold. First, we must know this power because of the forces of evil arrayed against us. We will come to this in chapter 6. Second, he says it is because of worldliness. I want to quote what he says here, "Nothing is so dangerous to the soul, because of its subtlety, as the worldliness which meets us at every turn. You start with it in your newspapers in the morning. They do not confine themselves to important international or national news, matters of urgency and of crisis, or threat of war, but constantly in their news and views they suggest lust and desire and everything that is opposed to the commandments of God. The same pernicious influence is found in an endless succession of books and films in a most seductive and attractive

form. Then there is what the Apostle describes as 'the pride of life', all that is represented by so-called 'society life', pride of ancestry and class, and the external pomp and show. It is so pleasing, and so enticing to the natural man and so many nice people participate in it. This is surely the biggest fight the Christian Church has to wage in this hour. There has been a lowering of moral standards everywhere. We have traveled very far from the days of Puritanism. The line between the Church and the world is almost invisible, and the people of God no longer stand out in their uniqueness as they once did. The New Testament is full of warnings about this subtle, tremendous power of the world, which would drag us away from the Christ in whom we believe, which would make us deny Him in practice and reduce us to a state described in the words, 'Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof' (2 Timothy 3:5)."

Well, Jones goes on to describe not only the power of the world but of the flesh and the devil as well. But I would like to awake us for a moment to the power of the world. I see some of it in Tompkins Evangelical Church. Men, I would challenge us to deal with the great temptations of men. You see, the great temptations of men are usually not so visible. They go on inside the heart. I want to challenge us this morning that the power of God is available to help us to cut all ungodliness and temptations to worldliness and fleshliness.

Ladies, your great temptations in this area want to manifest themselves visibly. 1 Peter 3:3 lists three major areas that want to be a source

of temptation to you. First, the hair. I want to encourage you that the power of God is available to you to overcome all manner of temptation in this area. Second is outward additions to the body in the form of jewelry and such like. Now these things exert a different degree of power on different people. But I would dare say you will all struggle with one or more of these three. And you will find every imaginable excuse why certain things are acceptable or you will argue that there is nothing wrong with it. I am not setting the standards here. You can talk to God about it. He knows your heart and His own will. The third is clothing. I wonder which human being of the feminine gender does not know the great power this matter of necessity brings with it. Ladies, let me speak very plainly but in love. Cover your bodies. I would like to add that summer-time heat is no excuse to indecency. Permit me to speak one thing from a man's heart. Some clothing covers quite nicely except at times. Someone has called this peekaboo clothing. I wish I could tell you what a subtle demonic thing that is.

Oh the power of the world, the flesh and the devil! We must know and have our eyes open. We must search the will of God and humbly submit to the teaching of the Word of God. If you want to know the power that this is comparable to, it is the power God exercised when He raised Christ from the dead and exalted Him to His own right hand. Oh may God grant us wisdom and insight into these matters and may we humbly obey Him!

Now a word to parents and I speak to myself. You will face a constant

battle with your children in this matter, unless of course you drop your standards. I want to challenge us to not grow weary in this battle. From my youth to this day I have seen something scary take place in this matter of worldliness. Many many preachers spoke out on these matters in the Christian world. And then parents and preachers became tired. And I can give you a statement from a certain conservative preacher that shows the change of attitude that took place. Speaking of makeup and lipstick and so on he had finally given in and he did it with a bit of humor. He said, "Well, if the barn needs paint'n, paint it!" A change came over our Christian world. I saw it first in the homes and later I watched it happen in one of the last Bible schools to drop its standards in this area in Canada.

Today everything has been converted to Christianity. Porn magazines, western stories, and you name it. And so what I would like to do this morning is not list a lot of things that I think are wrong. I would ask you parents, young people, examine your lives. If you find yourself defending certain things in your lives, I encourage you, don't argue. Go before God and His Word. Say, Lord, I want Your will. Reveal it to me. If you find freedom from the Lord you need not live under my standards. It is the Lord before whom you will stand in judgment, not me.

Now I propose to you this morning that the reason Paul wants us to know the power of God is not only so we will grow intellectually. He wants us to know this power so that we will tap into it and use it to overcome these great powers that exercise their

strength against us. And when he illustrates the power that is ever emanating toward the believer as the power God used to raise and exalt Christ, then we realize the extent of power necessary to overcome the world the flesh and the devil.

I have mentioned to you that recently I have been studying in Revelation in preparation for our next series in Wednesday night Bible study. I would like you to turn to Revelation 2. (Read 2:7, 17, 26-29; 3:5, 12, 21-22; Rev. 12:11). I ask you, are you an overcomer or are you overcome?

CONCL: This morning we have looked at the third thing Paul prayed the Ephesians might come to know. It is the power of God which is demonstrated for us in the resurrection and exaltation to God's right hand of Jesus Christ. We have considered the tremendous ability required to do this. The ability required to do this is an ability to override the natural laws in force.

I have pointed out to you that it is this kind of power that is required to overcome sin in our lives. This morning we have spent some time in considering the power of the world. I have challenged us to examine our own lives in light of this. I must say, let us not be unwise and compare ourselves among ourselves. For example: What I do is nothing in comparison to so and so. No, let us examine ourselves in light of the Word of God. And if we find fault in our lives, then let us avail ourselves of the power of God to overcome.