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"Preaching grace in the Dispensation of grace"

A Bible Study

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"The Power of His Might"

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The book of Ephesians begins with a three chapter exposition of the *wealth* of our *calling* in Christ as members of His body. This is followed by almost three more full chapters detailing our *walk* in our *conduct* as members of that body on planet earth. Paul then concludes the epistle with an exhortation concerning the *warfare* we face due to our *conflict* with the adversary the devil.

These final instructions are introduced with the statement:

"Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might" (Eph. 6:10).

This is a twofold declaration. First comes a message of *grace*: *Be strong in the Lord.*" As we saw in our study of this phrase last month, this is an exhortation to be strong in God's grace to us in Christ--to take our stand in the "*all spiritual blessings in heavenly places*" which God's grace has so freely bestowed upon us "*in Christ.*"

To this Paul adds a message of *glory*: "Be strong in....*the power of His might.* Although this part of the verse is often mistakenly assumed to be simply a repetition of the first part, we will find great profit in considering it more fully on its own.

A MESSAGE OF GLORY

In speaking of being strong in "*the power of His might*" Paul is referring back to Eph. 1 and the risen, ascended Lord Jesus as the source of the power which enables us to stand the shock of the battle with the adversary. He does this for a very important reason--one which explains why Satan hates the Body of Christ and the message of grace with such ire.

Eph. 1:15-23 contains the first of two great prayers recorded in this book. It is a prayer for *enlightenment*: that believers might *know* what is (1) "*the hope of His calling*" --the glorious expectation inspired by what God has purposed to do with and through the Body of Christ; (2) "*the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints*" --what God will gain for Himself in all He plants to accomplish; and (3) "*the exceeding greatness of His power*" in accomplishing it all.

The standard for measuring "*the greatness of His power*" is then set forth:

"...according to the working of His mighty power,"Which HE WROUGHT IN CHRIST, WHEN HE RAISED HIM FROM THE DEAD, AND SET HIM AT HIS OWN RIGHT HAND IN HEAVENLY PLACES,

"FAR ABOVE ALL PRINCIPALITY, AND POWER, AND MIGHT, AND DOMINION, AND EVERY NAME THAT IS NAMED, NOT ONLY IN THIS WORLD, BUT ALSO IN THAT WHICH IS TO COME:

"AND HATH PUT ALL THINGS UNDER HIS FEET, AND GAVE HIM TO BE THE HEAD OVER ALL THINGS TO THE CHURCH,

"WHICH IS HIS BODY, THE FULNESS OF HIM THAT FILLETH ALL IN ALL" (Eph. 1:19-23).

God's power has been measured in different ways through out Scripture. It was manifest in creation. With Israel, When the Lord wanted to cite who He is and what He dose, He often pointed to the their deliverance through the Red Sea as illustrating His power to deliver them. In the dispensation of grace, however, His power is set forth "when He *raised [Christ] from the dead and set Him at His own right hand* in heavenly places."

It is important to read these verses fully and appreciate that much more than simply the resurrection of Christ from the dead in view here--as glorious as that wonderful truth is!

What is being referred to here is the *headship* of the Lord Jesus Christ over the government of the universe. The Father "raise Him from the dead"--and not just to "sit on David's throne" (Acts 2:30), as prophecy had predicted. We now know He has "set Him at his own right hand *in heavenly places*, far above all principality and power and might and dominion."

For God to have "set Him at His own right hand *in heavenly places*" and to have "put all things under His feet and [given] Him to be *head over all things*" signifies that Christ has been placed into a position of *governmental headship*. Just what government the "principality--power--might --dominion" is referring to is expanded on in Col. 1:16,

"For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones or dominions, or principalities or powers: all things were created by him, and for him."

There is a government not only "*in the earth*" but also "*in heaven*." Just as Satan usurped the position of "prince of this world" he has also take the position of "*prince of the power of the air*" --the unseen, heavenly realm. But God has a plan and purpose to restore His authority in all these governmental positions--in heaven as well as in the earth.

His prophesied intent is to reclaim the authority in the earth through the instrumentality of a kingdom vested in the nation Israel. This is the subject of *prophecy* and has been "*spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began*" (Acts 3:21).

God also has a purpose and plan to restore His authority in the government in the heavenly places as well. This is the subject of the *mystery* revealed to Paul and was "*kept secret since the world began but now has been made manifest*" (Rom. 16:25; Eph. 3:1-9).

Eph. 1:19-22 is setting forth the greatness God's power as demonstrated by making the Lord Jesus Christ the head over a heavenly kingdom. The governmental positions of rank and authority which have been usurped from God's authority by Satan and his host have been reclaimed by the Lord Jesus Christ now sits as the *head of "all things"*. Notice that the context defines "*all things*" in verse 19-- "*all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named.*"

And this is done to the specific advantage of the members of the Body of Christ:

"And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church:

"Which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all" (vs. 22, 23).

Notice Paul does not here say that Christ is the "*head of the church.*" That is glorious truth but it isn't the point here. Rather Eph. 1:22 declares Him to be "*head over all things to the church.*" Again, the "all things" over which He is made head is the heavenly government --and it to the *advantage of the church* that He is so positioned.

Christ has a *two-fold* headship which should not be confused. Col. 1:18 declares, "*He is head of the body, the church.*" But he is *also* the "*head of all principality and power,*" as Col. 2:10 clearly states:

"And ye are complete in him, WHICH IS THE HEAD OF ALL PRINCIPALITY AND POWER."

It is Col.2:10 which matches Eph.1:21, 22--not Col.1:18. At this point perhaps we should examine Co.1:16-18, for these verses hold the key to how Christ's headship over the heavenly government is for our advantage.

"For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him:

"And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.

"And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence".

It is God's intention that Jesus Christ have the preeminence in "*all things*". Once again, the context of Col.1:16-18 clearly defines the "all things" being spoken of as those things identified in verse 16--the positions of government created by Jesus Christ in heaven and earth. These are the "all things" that are to be "reconciled" in Col.1:20. (Failure to recognize this clear contextual fact has led to such erroneous ideas as the lost or even Satan himself being included in verse 20's "*all things*". Notice how verse 20 tells its reader where to find the identity of the "*all things*" by repeating the verse "*things in earth, or things in heaven*" from verse 16). The reference is to the *future* restoration of the *system of government* originally established over heaven and earth.

It is clear from the *prophetic* program that Jesus Christ was to be head of "all things" *in the earth*. When He sits on "the throne of His glory and reigns from Jerusalem, He will be "*King of Kings*" and "*all nations shall serve Him*". What was unknown until the revelation of the *mystery* was that He also had a plan to reclaim His position in the *heavenlies*.

From Genesis 1:1 until the raising up of the Apostle Paul, the issue in the program of God was the *earth*. Now with the revelation of the *mystery*, the heavenly places have become the focus. God will restore the earth to Himself through the nation Israel; the heavenly places through the Body of Christ. Then Christ will be head of "all things." This is what Eph.1:9-10 looks to:

"Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself:

"That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are in earth; even in him".

In order for Christ to be preeminent in "*all things*," He needed the Body of Christ. Israel would be His agency to reclaim the government of the earth. But He would need a "new creature"--a "*new man*"--to extend His reign into the heavenly places. Thus Christ has been made "*head over the body*"--"*that in all things he might have the preeminence.*"

Without the Body of Christ He could never reclaim "*all*" things. Thus Christ has been made "head over all things *to the church*"--that is, to the *advantage* of the church, for the church is "His body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all."

In other words, it will be members of the Body of Christ whom He will use to fill up the positions of governmental authority in the heavenly places and through whom He will carry out the rule and business of His "*heavenly kingdom*" (II Tim. 4:18).

What a position is ours! What power and authority had been exercised in our behalf! And it is in this power that we are stand fast.

WHY IT IS NEEDED

Our need for being strong in this power of His might goes much deeper than simply the momentary difficulties and vicissitudes of life. Consider Eph.3:9, 10.

"And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ:

"TO THE INTENT THAT NOW UNTO THE PRINCIPALITIES AND POWERS IN HEAVENLY PLACES MIGHT BE KNOWN BY THE CHURCH THE MANIFOLD WISDOM OF GOD."

You see, as we make known "*the fellowship of the mystery*"--as Body truth works in our lives, we manifest unto the angelic beings currently filling the positions of principalities and powers in the heavenly places the manifold wisdom of God in reconciling even those positions back under His authority through Christ. And what is that "*manifold wisdom*"? 1Cor.2:6-8 tells us:

"Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought:

"But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory:

"WHICH NONE OF THE PRINCES OF THIS WORLD KNEW: FOR HAD THEY KNOWN IT, THEY WOULD NOT HAVE CRUCIFIED THE LORD OF GLORY."

Simply by *keeping a secret* about what He would accomplish through the cross-work of Jesus Christ, God “*spoiled principality and power*” and “*made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it*” (col. 2:15).

At Calvary God took the wise in his own craftiness! In the face of Satan's boasted "wisdom" all God had to do was *keep a secret* and Satan fooled himself into doing the very thing that resulted in assuring his doom.

Is there any wonder Satan hates the truth of the mystery so? Is there any question he would oppose those who proclaim it to others? Thus Paul says,

"...BE STRONG IN THE LORD, AND IN THE POWER OF HIS MIGHT."

Our strength is in what God had done *in Christ*. It is this message of *grace* and *glory* Satan so bitterly hates. Yet this is the very truth that makes us strong as we rest by faith in what God has made us *in Christ*. It is this message we are privileged to cherish, to guard, to proclaim and with which to fill our lives.
