

“Being God’s inheritance: Ephesians 1:19-23”

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Outline – Tom Mount – Holy Trinity Chico

Introduction

1. In 1901 the unpublished notes of Friedrich Nietzsche were published under the title “The Will to Power”. In it, Nietzsche make the case that the will to power—to exert one’s dominance, to control—is the most primal and basic of human instincts.
2. It’s no wonder that, within a generation, Nietzsche’s views were appropriated by Hitler and Nazi party to rationalize their project of Arianizing Europe.
3. The cult of the Will to Power didn’t die in 1945 with Hitler in his Führerbunker in Berlin. It is alive in well in the Marxist regimes of China, No Korea, Venezuela, and Cuba and, closer to home, in the rioting of Antifa and BLM in places like Portland, Seattle, D.C. and Kenosa. What we read in our daily news feeds are simply contemporary examples of Nie’s vision applied to 21st century life.
4. Power is essential to life. Let’s think about the Xn life for a minute. How would power be most helpful to us in living it out? How about the power to resist temptation, be successful in doing spiritual warfare against, discerning the world and resisting it’s pull, living a godly life, being present to others, being bold in stating your beliefs, serving others with power supplied by God?
5. Well, the power to do all these things is right at our fingertips. It is available to you and me by virtue of our being in Christ and he in us.
6. In Eph 1.18-19, Paul prays for three things.
 - the hope of your calling (v.18a).
 - the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy ones (v.18b).

- his incomparably great power for us who believe (v.19).

Exposition of 1:18b-23

- The people Paul is writing to have, for most of their lives, been enslaved to their fears of the various gods that populated their part of the Greco-Roman world. These gods were real spiritual beings with real power to harass and cause harm. They were fallen *elohim*, created by God, subservient to God but in active rebellion against Him.
- The Ephesians believed their fate was determined by the fickleness of these gods and the movements of the stars. So, they
 - practiced astrology and magic to divine their fate and influence it for the good;
 - wore charms and amulets to ward off evil spirits;
 - used spells, incantations, and various prayers to beg, manipulate and threaten the gods who played with them like a cats play with mice.
- Power was a huge deal to them. So, it is for people in this condition that Paul prays that God would give them understanding into:

“his incomparably great power for us who believe”

- Paul pulls out all the stops to emphasize the magnitude, the plentitude, the boundless enormity of this power.
- First, he describes this power as “incomparably great”
 - **great** is *megathos*; **incomparably** is *hyperballon*, which is a cool word picture. Skevington Wood: “Literally, it suggests that the conception it is attached to is thrown over into another sphere altogether.”
 - **for us who believe** without qualification. All of us: All of God’s people have direct access to this incomprehensible and inexhaustible potency.
- Second, look at the number of words he uses to describe the...
 - power is *dunamis*: inherent power or ability (dynamite)

- mighty is *ischys*: force, might
- strength is *kratos*: great power, mighty deed
- exerted is *energeo*: to put forth power or work

One scholar, Clinton Arnold, comments that Paul “nearly exhausts the reservoir of power-denoting terms in the Greek language.”

- Third, note that Paul connects the power God gives us to the power he demonstrated in the resurrection and enthronement of Jesus Christ.

“That power is the same as the mighty strength he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead”

- Now as an aside, note that the Father is the one credited here with having raised Jesus from the dead. (John 10:18 – Jesus; Romans 8:11 – The Holy Spirit).

- What kind of power did it take for the Father to raise Jesus from Sheol, the place of the dead?

1. Power over death itself as a phenomenological given. This seemed to entail at least a partial suspension of the second law of thermodynamics
2. The power to convert something inherently bad in an of itself (the privation of life) into something redemptive and good; the means to a higher and better mode of being. C.S. Lewis commented about death: “Our enemy, so welcomed, becomes our servant.”
3. The power to reconstitute and revivify a human body already in the early stages of decomposition, reversing the course of decay by reestablishing brain activity, cardiovascular flow, muscle tone, etc.
4. The power to transform the very substance of that body from pure material elements and compounds like carbon, oxygen, phosphorous, and calcium into an entirely different substance altogether: something Paul refers to cryptically as a “spiritual body” in 1 Cor 15.

5. The power to rob hades of its righteous inhabitants, beginning with Adam and Eve and all the OT saints and to raise them up to the new paradise in heaven.

“and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms,”

- Not only did the Father refashion Christ’s body at His resurrection, he then raised him up to the highest heaven and enthroned him over the entire cosmos.
- The **“right hand”** of the king symbolized the supreme place of authority and power in the ANE.
- In this verse, Paul is referencing Ps 110, the most frequently quoted psalm in the NT. Verse 1 reads: **“Yahweh said to my Lord, ‘Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet’.”** Who are Christ’s enemies?

“far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in the present age but also in the one to come.”

- What’s Paul referring to here? **Rule** is *arche*; **authority** is *exousia*; **power** is *dunamis*; **dominion** is *kuriotes*. All four of these names were common descriptors of angelic or spiritual beings in Paul’s day. These were four ranks of fallen *elohim*, spiritual beings created by God who chose to exercise their free will in opposition to God.
- All these spiritual beings were created through the Son and for the Son . Colossians 1:15-16 make this clear: “The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. ¹⁶ For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him.”
- These fallen beings are now subjugated enemies. They still have a measure of freedom until God brings to completion His plans for the cosmos (unlike the offending spiritual beings we discussed last week who are being confined in the underworld prison until judgment).

- One way to understand Jesus' relationship to these fallen *elohim* is to compare it to the relationship between a human being to an intrusion of cockroaches. They come out at night; they are a nuisance, but their power is miniscule in comparison to yours and you can crush them anytime you want. And when Jesus comes a second time as conquering King, he will crush them utterly.

- Where do we believers stand with respect to these corrupt *elohim*? According to Psalm 8, all humans are below them in terms of our physical bodies. But in terms of spiritual authority and power, redeemed humans are actually above them.

“every name that is named, not only in the present age but also in the one to come.”

- With this blanket statement, Paul insists that any and every name you could possibly name in this life and the next falls under Jesus' authority. They all cower at His Name and cringe before His power and authority.

“And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.”

- A couple observations here. First, Paul says God made Jesus the supreme power in the universe, **“for the church”**: **for our benefit!**. God has given an extraordinary gift to the church: He has placed His Son Jesus over every single thing in the universe. And because He is over all things, the church has plenipotentiary power, supreme authority, to overcome every conceivable opposition because the head of the Church is over all.

- Clint Arnold writes: “The head of the church is a victorious and powerful Lord. On this basis, Christ can impart to the church all of the empowering resources it needs to resist the attacks of powers and to engage in the mission of filling the world that God has called it to.”

- Which leads to the final observation. Because the church is filled with Christ, and the church is located all over the earth—manifesting God's truth, love and gifts—Christ himself can be said to fill everything in every way.

Take away

I hope by now you are convinced that you have at your disposal a gigantic arsenal of spiritual power. What can you use that power to do?

1. First, you have the power to live a godly, holy life, resisting temptation, conquering your passions, becoming like God in your character, love and values. Romans 6, Galatians 5 and 1 John 3 make it very clear that you are no longer a slave to those instinctive, habituated patterns of thought and action that have dogged you all your life. You can change.
2. Second, you have the power to make a huge positive difference in the lives of other people by identifying and using the spiritual gifts the Holy Spirit makes available to us. What are your spiritual gifts? Do you know? Are you using them regularly to build up God's people and reach out to those who don't know Christ? If not, why not? These gifts are things like administering, serving, giving, teaching, prophesying, healing, encouraging.
3. Third, you have the power to identify, resist and exorcise evil spiritual beings who might be harassing you or others. You don't have to put up with their shenanigans. When you suspect that a spiritual being might be operating in a certain situation, call it out. Assert Christ's authority over it and command it in Jesus' name to stop its actions and go to the place He has assigned it.