

Ephesians 1:19-23

- The Power of God, Christ, and the church -

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Introduction

- ❖ What is the difference between The United States of America (or another nation) and the Church of Jesus Christ?
 - The USA is a powerful nation. But the jurisdiction is principally limited within its borders. There are other nations. It can use military interventions, political and economic pressure. After four or eight years, there will be a new president in office, they will come and go.
 - The church is the community of Christ. This community is found everywhere, even in the remotest areas of this world. The church can be oppressed, and persecution, but the 'head of state' has eternal power and jurisdiction. The church doesn't use military interventions, political and economic pressure, racial or social exclusion, alas sometimes during the history the picture has been different.
 - The church is filled by the fulness of Christ, his love, his wisdom, spirit, grace, righteousness, and reconciliation.
 - Although the church might seem weak, it is sustained by the incomparable power of God.
- ❖ The context, form and structure, theological notes, technical and hermeneutical notes given in this sermon outline below show some overlap with other sermon outlines taken from Paul's Letter to the Ephesians. This makes it possible to use this sermon outline as a "stand-alone" and as part of a series.

Literary and historical context

- ❖ The City of Ephesus:¹
 - The city was an important administrative and commercial hub of the Roman province of Asia. Nowadays the remnants of the magnificent city theatre can still be viewed. It had a seating capacity of 24,000 people (Acts 19:30-41). The temple of Artemis was famous and already classified in the ancient world as one of the seven wonders of the world. Numerous other gods and goddesses were worshipped.
- ❖ The City of Ephesus in the New Testament:
 - Paul visited Ephesus for the first time only briefly on his way to Jerusalem (Acts 18:18-22). After he had left the city, Priscilla and Aquila continued to preach the gospel (Acts 18:24-28).
 - Paul visited the city for a second time and stayed there for more than two years (Acts 19): "**This went on for two years, so that all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord.**" More churches were probably established during these years (Rev 2-3) in the Roman province of Asia.
 - Paul must have encountered severe conditions while he was in Ephesus. In his letter to the Corinthians, he wrote: "**If I fought wild beasts in Ephesus** for merely human reasons, what have I gained? If the dead are not raised, 'Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die'" (1 Cor 15:32). The majority of recent scholars postulate that Paul was in prison one or more times while he was in Ephesus.
 - Paul met the Elders of the church on the beach of the city of Miletus (Acts 20:13-38) when he travelled to Jerusalem.
 - Jews from Asia recognized Paul when he entered the temple in Jerusalem: "**Some Jews from the province of Asia saw Paul at the temple.** They stirred up the whole crowd and seized him" (Acts 21:27; 24:19).
 - Later, Paul sent Timothy to Ephesus (1 Tim 1:3) to support this church through teaching and instructions.
- ❖ Finally, the apostle John received his Revelation of Jesus Christ and sent it to the seven churches in Asia, the first being Ephesus (Rev 1:11; 2:1-7). According to old church traditions, John probably stayed in Ephesus.
- ❖ An overview of the letter to the Ephesians and the context of 2:19-23:

1:1-2	Salutation
1:3-14	Blessing or glorification of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit
1:15-23	First prayer and thanksgiving to God

¹ Arnold, C. (1993). Ephesus. In *Dictionary of Paul and his Letters* (pp. 249-253). Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press.

2:1-22	Gentiles and Jews are both made alive in Christ – a new creation, a holy temple in the Lord
3:1-13	Admonition: don't be discouraged because of my sufferings (Paul)
3:14-22	Second prayer and glorification of God
4:1-6:9	Admonition: live a life worthy of the calling you have received: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4:1-16 • Live a life of love within the community of the church, which is the body of Christ • 4:17-5:20 • Live a life of love as a new creation in Christ, as children of God, filled with the Holy Spirit • 5:21-6:9 • Live a life of love, especially within the family-household
6:10-20	The spiritual warfare
6:21-24	Greetings

Form and structure

- ❖ Ephesians 2:15-23 consists of two parts:

Paul is praying for the church (verse 15-19)	
<i>Reason:</i>	<p>¹⁵For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints,</p> <p>¹⁶I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers.</p>
<i>Prayer:</i>	<p>¹⁷I 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.</p> <p>¹⁸I 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, ¹⁹and his incomparably great power for us who believe.</p>

He concentrates on the power of God (verse 19-23)	
<i>The power</i>	<p>That power is like the working of his mighty strength, ²⁰ which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, ²¹ far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. ²² And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, ²³ which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.</p>

Technical, theological and hermeneutical notes

- ❖ Literary notes:
 - The authorship and addressees of this letter have much been debated.² Pauline authorship is affirmed by tradition and autobiographical information.
- ❖ General theological notes:
 - The letter to the Ephesians is essentially Trinitarian:
 - Ephesians 1:3-14. “Praise be to the **God and Father** of our Lord Jesus Christ.... Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised **Holy Spirit**, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possession—to the praise of his glory.”
 - Ephesians 1:17: “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.”
 - Ephesians 2:18: “For through **him** (Jesus Christ) we both have access to the **Father** by **one Spirit**.” (See also Eph 2:22; 3:5.)
 - Ephesians 3:14-19: “For this reason I kneel before the **Father**,... 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....”

² Arnold, C. (1993). Ephesians, Letter to. In *Dictionary of Paul and his Letters* (pp. 240-242). Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press.

- Ephesians 4:4-6: “There is one body and one **Spirit**— just as you were called to one hope when you were called—⁵ one **Lord**, one faith, one baptism; ⁶ one **God and Father** of all, who is over all and through all and in all.”

- Paul begins his letter with an exclamation of praise to God (Eph 1:3) and the mercies of God, especially his love: “But because of **his great love for us, God**, who is rich in mercy” (Eph 2:4).
- Christ is the exalted one (Eph 1:21-22). He is the head of all creation (Eph 1:10) and especially of his body the church (Eph 4:15).

- Unity of the believers with Christ, the “saints in Ephesus, **the faithful in Christ Jesus**”:

- The expression “in Christ” or “in him” occurs thirty-four times! There is a mystic corporate unity and solidarity of all believers in Christ, which is practised in the local congregation.
- In him we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins (Eph 1:7). “In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan” of God (Eph 1:11).
- God “made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus” (Eph 2:5-6).

❖ Hermeneutical notes:

- Paul wrote this letter to the Ephesians, although both assertions have been contested by scholars (see above).
 - For the exposition, it is fruitful to refer to the implied author and the implied addressee. We can't meet Paul nor the Ephesians personally. There is a distance of place and time between the first readers, Paul, and the 21st-century reader. But we can get to know them both through the contents of this letter. The author (Paul) tells some things about himself, personal information, style of writing, his concerns. The same is true for the Ephesians, but the information we receive is given by the implied author.
- The implied author makes himself known by:
 - Personal remarks, such as “**As a prisoner for the Lord**,” which tell something about his situation.
 - The use of personal pronouns, such as “I”, “my” and to a lesser extent “we”, because in this case he includes others as well.
 - His theological statements, acclamations and prayers, which are embedded in the larger Christian community.

- The implied audience is made known by the author of the letter:
 - When he writes about their local and sometimes personal circumstances.
 - When he uses specific personal pronouns, such as “you”, “we” – including himself, “they”, when he is writing about others.
 - When he uses imperatives and specific figures or style, such as hyperboles, understatements, irony. Take, for example, Ephesians 4:2-4:
 - “**I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received**” (verse 2) tells us something about Paul and the Ephesians:
 - To Paul, it is important (“**I urge**”) to live a life worthy before God.
 - Paul is concerned about the conduct of the Ephesians (“**I urge you**”). These concerns are exemplified by verse 3: “**Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.**”
 - Because, by implication, (some) were not humble and gentle; (some) were not patient, not bearing with one another in love. And by doing so, breaking up the bond of peace (verse 4).
- ❖ Important theme: power:
 - There are two passages in which Paul addresses the power of God, the power of the enemy, and the spiritual war in which the believers are engaged:
 - Ephesians 2:19-23;
 - Ephesians 6:10-12(-18).
 - Paul uses four different words, and related verbs, to describe the power of God.
 - “Power” = “δύναμις”: ‘capability’, with emphasis on function. 1. **potential for functioning in some way, power, might, strength, force, capability.**³ The power of God. See also Ephesians 3:7; 16, 20. This power is working:
 - “Be strong” = “ἐνδυναμόω”: 2. **to become able to function or do something, become strong** passive with active sense.⁴
 - “Working” = “ἐνέργεια”: **the state or quality of being active, working, operation, action.**⁵ See also Ephesians 3:7.

³ Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000, p. 262).

⁴ Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000, p. 333).

⁵ Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000, p. 335).

- “Exerted” = “ἐνεργέω”: 2. **to bring something about through use of capability, work, produce, effect.**⁶
 - “Mighty” = “κράτος”: 1. **ability to exhibit or express resident strength, might of God.** 3. **exercise of ruling ability, power, rule, sovereignty.**⁷ This is important concerning what follows, where Paul writes about powers ruling this earth.
 - “Strength” = “ἰσχύς”: **capability to function effectively, strength, power, might.**⁸
 - The “mighty strength” and “mighty power” is also found in Ephesians 6:10.
- Christ received the authority to rule. He has far more authority than the (spiritual) powers of this world. Again Paul uses several words to refer to these powers. See also Colossians 1:16.
 - “rule” = “ἀρχή”: 6. **an authority figure who initiates activity or process, ruler, authority.**⁹ These authorities or rulers can be earthly but also spiritual (Eph 3:10; 6:12).
- “Authority” = “ἐξουσία”: 5.b of transcendent **rulers** and functionaries: powers of the spirit world.¹⁰ See also Ephesians 3:10; 6:12. Ephesians 2:2 is more elaborate: “**the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient.**”
- “Power” = “δύναμις”: 5. **an entity or being, whether human or transcendent, that functions in a remarkable manner, power** as a personal transcendent spirit or heavenly agent/angel.¹¹
- “Dominion” = “κυριότης”: 3. **a special class of angelic powers, bearers of the ruling power, dominions.**¹²
- “Every title that can be given.” By using this expression, Paul probably wants to include every thinkable spiritual power. In Ephesians 6:12 he adds:

⁶ Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000, p. 335).

⁷ Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000, p. 565).

⁸ Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000, p. 484).

⁹ Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000, p. 138).

¹⁰ Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000, p. 353).

¹¹ Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000, p. 263).

¹² Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000, p. 579).

- “The powers” of this dark world = “κοσμοκράτωρ”: evil spirits, the rulers of this sinful world.¹³
- The last category Paul mentions “the spiritual forces of evil.”
- ❖ The battlefield of this warfare between Christ and “the powers” is this earth and the human heart.
 - Ephesians 2:1, 2: “As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient.”
 - Ephesians 6:12, 13: “For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.”
 - The armour consists of (Eph 6:14-18): the truth, righteousness, the gospel of peace, faith, salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, and prayer.

Exposition

Verse 3-14 summary

- ❖ This most important part of the letter consists of three sections, each ending with “**to the praise of glorious grace.**” The author is glorifying God. Everything is “**in Christ.**” The plan of God is revealed by “**in accordance with**”/“**according to**.”
 - (verse 3-6) - *election*
 - Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing **in Christ.**
 - For he chose us **in him** before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight.
 - In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ,
 - **in accordance with** his pleasure and will—
 - **to the praise of his glorious grace,** which he has freely given us **in the One he loves.**
 - (verse 7-12) - *redemption*
 - **In him** we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins,
 - **in accordance with** the riches of God’s grace that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding.
 - And he made known to us the mystery of his will

¹³ Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000, p. 561).

- according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment—to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ.
- In him we were also chosen, having been predestined
 - according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory.
- (verse 13-14) - *inheritance*
 - And you also were included in Christ
 - when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation.
 - Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory.

❖ Some remarks:

- We – You: In verse 3-12 Paul uses “we”. In verse 13 and 14 he is addressing the congregation “you.” Both “we” and “you” receive the inheritance “our.” This means that everything he has written in verse 3-12 is also applied to the church in Ephesus.
 - Who are these “we”? This is Paul and the brothers who are with him, only Tychicus (Eph 6:21) is mentioned by name.
- “Every spiritual blessing” “in Christ” (verse 3):
 - Election to be holy and blameless (verse 4);
 - Predestined to be adopted as his sons (verse 5);
 - Also (verse 11);
 - Redemption through his blood (verse 7);
 - Made known the mystery of his will for the future (verse 9) inheritance (14).
- Everything is according to his will, love, grace and plan (verse 5, 7, 9 and 11).
- The future: “to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ” (verse 9). This verse will be elaborated in verse 19-23!
- Before reading further, it is necessary to pause for a moment and to have look at the person of Christ.
 - Already before the creation, the believers were chosen in Christ, the Lord Jesus. Everything we receive, we receive in Christ! He is from eternity.
 - Christ will receive all power, cosmic power (verse 9). He is Lord of all.

Verse 15-17 summary

- ❖ “For this reason” refers primarily to verse 13 and 14. Paul gives thanks for their faith.
- He keeps praying that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give them the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that they may know him better.

- “Glorious” = “δόξα”: 1. **the condition of being bright or shining, brightness, splendor, radiance.**¹⁴
- And: “That the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know:
 - (1) the hope to which he has called you,
 - (2) the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints,
 - (3) and his incomparably great power for us who believe.”
- Paul uses two different Greek words meaning to know. This will not be discussed in this outline.

¹⁴ Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000, p. 257).

- The following comparison shows that the power of God at work in Christ is also at work in those who believe.

That the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know	
<i>Ephesians 1:19-21</i>	<i>Ephesians 2:4-7</i>
<p>... his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead - and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, - far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, - not only in the present age but also in the one to come. 	<p>(That power) made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - And God raised us up with Christ - and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, - in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.

Verse 19-23

- ❖ “**Incomparably great power**” (verse 19.a)
 - This power is a spiritual power which effects the physical life in this world.
 - It is the creative power of God (Rom 1:20).
- ❖ “**That power is like the working of his mighty strength.**” This is compound description is for rhetorical purposes, to stress the incomparability of the power of God. For the meaning of the different words, see above.
 - “**is like**”. This is not a comparison, but meant to set a standard, “the measure by which this power may be described.”¹⁵

¹⁵ Bratcher, R. G., & Nida, E. A. (1993, p. 34).

- This sentence as an abstract character. Bratcher and Nida suggest the following: “It may be necessary to restructure *This power working in us is the same as the mighty strength which he used when he raised Christ from death* as ‘In the same way that he is able to help us, so in that same way he was able to raise Christ from death’ or ‘... cause him to live again.’ Sometimes the equivalent of *power* or *strength* may be represented in speaking of a person being ‘very able to’ or ‘being very strong to.’”¹⁶
 - This power is revealed in:
 - “**in Christ when he raised him from the dead.**” There are two aspects:
 - By raising Christ from the dead, God the Father declared Christ to be righteous, and:
 - “who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom 1:4).
 - By raising Christ from the dead, “Death has been swallowed up in victory” (1 Cor 15:54).
 - “**and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms**” (also: Acts 1:9-11). Because he is the righteous one, God the Father gave Christ the authority to rule and to judge.
 - Foulkes remarked: “The ascension may not often be described in the New Testament (Mark 16:19; Luke 24:51; Acts 1:9), but it is constantly assumed, and its significance stressed (e.g. Rom. 8:34; Col. 3:1; Heb. 1:3; 1 Pet. 3:22). To Paul, and in the New Testament generally, the cross, the resurrection and the ascension are considered as three parts of one great act of God.”¹⁷
 - Psalm 110 is instructive, one of the most cited texts in the New Testament:
 “The Lord says to my Lord:
 ‘Sit at my right hand
 until I make your enemies
 a footstool for your feet’ (Ps 110:1; See also Mt 22:44; Mk 12:36; Lk 20:42, 43; Acts 2:34, 35; Heb 1:13; 12:2; 1 Pet 3:22).
 - See also Revelation 5:9, 10, 12; 11:15; 22:1.
- ❖ “**far above all rule and authority....**”

¹⁶ Bratcher, R. G., & Nida, E. A. (1993, p. 34).

¹⁷ Foulkes, F. (1989, p. 71).

- “In Jewish thought these powers were viewed as angels, of which there were ranks and degrees, or as spirits (evil); in Greek thought they were seen as lesser gods and powers. The author here takes their existence for granted and does not argue about it.”¹⁸ See also Colossians 1:16.

- The members of the church in Ephesus had both a Hebrew and a Greek background (Eph 2:11-22).
- See also Philippians 2:9–11; Hebrews 1:4; 1 Peter 3:22.
- These powers stand behind the earthly (political, religious, judicial, economic and social) institutions which are responsible for oppression and persecution.

❖ **“not only in the present age but also in the one to come”**

- The present age. This age is essentially evil. The devil claimed this age or world to be his: “the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. ‘All this I will give you,’ he said” (Mt 4:8, 9).
 - This age (of struggle) is characterized by Paul:
 - “As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when **you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient**” (Eph 2:1, 2; see also Ephesians 4:17-19; 5:8).
 - “Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because **the days are evil**” (Eph 5:15, 16).
 - “**For our struggle is not against flesh and blood**, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms” (Eph 6:12).
 - Paul himself has been imprisoned (Eph 3:1, 13; 4:1).
- The age to come. This is the messianic age.

❖ **“And God placed all things under his feet.”** (See Psalm 8:6; also Matthew 28:18-20.)

- See Psalm 8:6; Heb 2:6-8; 1 Cor 15:27. “All things” refers to the whole of creation. Lenski notices that “the idea of subjecting hostile things is not conveyed but only that of ranging all things as a footstool under Christ’s feet” like Matthew 5:35.¹⁹

❖ NIV translates: **“and appointed him to be head over everything for the church”**; ESV translates: **“and gave him as head over all things to the church.”** Both translations are possible. In the first

¹⁸ Bratcher, R. G., & Nida, E. A. (1993, p. 35).

¹⁹ Lenski, R. C. H. (1937, p. 402).

translation, the church is the beneficiary of the fact that Christ is the head over everything.²⁰ In the second translation, the church receives Christ as head as a gift.

- “head” = “κεφαλή”: *head*. “Christ is the head not only of the body of Christians(church), but of the universe as a whole (Eph 1:22), and of every cosmic power, the head of all might and power (Col 2:10).²¹
- The first translation has some preference in light of what follows. The church has been a creation of Christ (Rev 1:5, 6) and a gift of God to his son (Jn 17: 2).
 - “the church”: = “ἐκκλησία”: is 3. an assembly of **people with shared belief, community, congregation**. This assembly is rooted in the Old Testament. Stephen referred to the assembly when he said: “He (Moses) was in **the assembly** in the desert, with the angel who spoke to him on Mount Sinai, and with our fathers; and he received living words to pass on to us” (Acts 7:38). Christians came together as an assembly to worship (1 Cor 11:18), to discuss matters of concern (Mt 18:17). This assembly could gather at homes (Rom 16:5; 1 Cor 16:19). This congregation was not necessarily limited to one meeting place (Acts 8:3): “Then **the church** (singular) throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria enjoyed a time of peace. It was strengthened; and encouraged by the Holy Spirit, it grew in numbers, living in the fear of the Lord” (Acts 9:31). Local congregations are also designated as “church” (Rev 2:1, 8, 12, 18; 3:1, 7, 14) and belong to the “churches” (Acts 15:41; Rev 2:7; a. o.).
 - “Church” can also refer to: c. **the global community of Christians, (universal) church**.
 - Matthew 16:18: “And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock **I will build my church**, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.”
 - Colossians 1:18: “And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy.” Verse 16 and 17 speak about the whole of the creation and of powers.
 - Ephesians 3:10: “His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms.”²²

²⁰ O’Brien, P. T. (1999, p. 145).

²¹ Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000, p. 542).

²² See also: Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000, p. 303-304).

- In this letter to the Ephesians, “church” refers both to the local assembly and congregation and the universal church.

❖ “**which is his body**”

- “body” Bratcher and Nida comment on this figure of speech: “The figure stresses the close, organic, living relationship between Christ and his people. It is not simply a functional, an official relationship, like that of a president to a business organization or of a chairman to a committee, but a relationship of a common life, a mutual, interdependent existence. Of course there is no idea of equality: Christ is the head and the church is subordinate to him.”²³
 - See also Ephesians 2:16; 4:4, 12, 16; 5:23; Romans 12:5; 1 Corinthians 12:13, 27.
 - The church is the visible presence of Christ in this world.

❖ “**the fullness of him who fills everything in every way**” Paul uses different words to express the same thought, or which light on this mystery from a different angle.

- Ephesians 2:21, 22: “In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.”
- Ephesians 3:17-19: “And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.”
- Ephesians 4:15, 16 is also a good illustration of what Paul says: “speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.”
- Ephesians 5:18-20: “Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit. Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.”
- See also Ephesians 5:29, 30: “After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church—for we are members of his body.”
 - Colossians 2:9 gives a summary: “For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority.”

²³ Bratcher, R. G., & Nida, E. A. (1993, p. 37).

- Colossians 1:19, 20: For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.
- O'Brien: "If 'fulness' denotes something like the divine power, essence, and glory, then the references to 'the fulness of God' (Eph 3:19) and 'the fulness of Christ' (Eph 4:13; Col 1:19; 2:9) are appropriately explained. According to Colossians 1:19, Christ is the person in whom God in all his fulness was pleased to take up his residence. All the attributes and activities of God—his spirit, word, wisdom, and glory—are perfectly displayed in Christ. In him all the fulness of deity dwells bodily (Col 2:9).²⁴

Application

Believers

- ❖ The eyes of the hearts may be enlightened to see and believe the greatness of God and Christ.
- ❖ Often the eyes of faith have been blinded by the present age.
 - It is necessary to pay attention to the present age, the spiritual powers at work, the spiritual struggle of the church, especially in affluent countries, in countries where the church is a minority or is persecuted.
 - The local situation of the church and the individual believer might give rise to all kinds of questions. If Christ has all power, why then...
 - These questions are also found in the Psalms

Praise

- ❖ Praise God the Father and his incomparable power revealed in the resurrection and exaltation of Christ.
 - The believers share in this resurrection (Eph 2:4-7) by the grace of God.
 - O'Brien refers to J. A. Fitzmyer who appropriately remarked that this resurrection power: "emanates from the Father, raises Jesus from the dead at the resurrection, endows him with a new vitality, and finally proceeds from him as the life-giving, vitalizing force of the 'new creation' and of the new life that Christians in union with Christ experience and live."²⁵ (See also Eph 4:24.)
- ❖ Praise Christ who has received the position of full authority to rule and to judge this world.
 - This calls for worship (Mt 28:16; Philip 2:5-11; Rev 5).
 - Heaven and earth.
 - Present and future times.

²⁴ O'Brien, P. T. (1999, p. 149).

²⁵ O'Brien, P. T. (1999, p. 139).

- ❖ Praise Christ as the head of the church his body and his love for the church.

Church

- ❖ Explain that the church is the visible representation of Christ in this world, which will be filled by the Spirit, wisdom, love, knowledge of Christ. The church will share in the glory of Christ.
- ❖ Stress the unity of the church with Christ. He will rule the church.
 - This calls for prayer and obedience, the new life, and the new creation in Christ.
 - The church is called to be a new reconciled and loving community of the adopted children of God.
 - The church of Christ should not strive for and cannot exercise political power, although during world history, especially where the church has or had the position of “state church”, the church has tried to do so. The power of the church is rooted in the power of Christ, it is the power of Spirit (Eph 6:10-18).

Faith

- ❖ The reading this passage should evoke:
 - Faith;
 - Trust;
 - Awe;
 - Joy.

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