

Power ;

and

Its Application

“Strengthened with power by His Spirit in the inner man.”—EPH. iii. 16.

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POWER ; AND THE WAY OF ITS APPLICATION.

(Eph. i. 18-23 : iii. 14-21)

To know the power of God and how it may be applied to us in the present time is of all moment to us. Passing through an antagonistic world, and having to do with an enemy who strenuously opposes our apprehension of the smallest of the blessings God has given to us, we too little realize the power which would enable us to lay hold of them. Our blessings are not of this world, and the devil by means of the world seeks to rob us of them.

But we see in the epistle to the Ephesians what the power of God is and how it is applied to us, to

enable us to rise above Satan's seductions and to enter upon the present enjoyment of our true

SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS.

The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ has "blessed us with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ" (Ch. i. 3). Here are blessings of an infinitely higher character than this world can offer, and nothing but the power of God, as we shall see, can enable us to apprehend and enter into them.

Now in scripture "spiritual" is opposed to "natural," "heavenly" to "earthly," and "in Christ" to "in Adam." We have certainly many natural blessings coming to us as children of Adam and for earth; but these are not our own blessings, though we are keen enough to discover and cultivate them; while at times we are at a loss to tell what our spiritual

blessings are, and we cultivate them far too little. God would have these wrought in us now. This, however, is dependent upon His power by His spirit.

Power is spoken of, or referred to in four ways in this epistle. It is first presented as

POWER TOWARD US.

That the eyes of the heart may be enlightened, the affections engaged by the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the full knowledge of God, is the first petition of the prayer in ch. i. And this in order that they may know three things, of which we have now to do only with the last. "That ye may know . . . what is the exceeding greatness of His power to usward who believe." By no possibility could this power be on our behalf unless the tremendous chasm which separated between God and us were obliterated.

ated. Sin and death must first be dealt with and for ever annulled. This could only be done by the sinless One going right down into the grave for us ; accepting all our sins as His own, and embracing in His arms of power all the horrors of death and judgment, destroying them thus for ever. Nothing of all the purposes of God could be accomplished apart from this !

In the passage before us Christ is presented to us as in the grave. Christ is dead for sins ! To the grave of Christ we are consequently invited to witness the surpassing greatness of God's power toward us. Naturally we might have expected to see this power in creation ; the existing universe upheld by the word of His power, or some new world quivering under divine creative impulse. In the grave we expect to see only the impotence of man and the power of death and corruption. Ah ! but here we

shall see, too, God's surpassing power. God spake and it was done. He commanded and it stood fast in creation, and none was there to suggest or to hinder. Men and devils had combined at the grave of Christ; earth and hell were interested in keeping Him there. The emperor's seal, a guard of the veteran soldiers of the empire, the reputation of the priests (God's so-called, Alas!) with all the power of the devil behind them, alike opposed the resurrection of that blessed Man from the grave. Spite of all God raised Him from the dead!

No one knew of it at the time of its occurrence, but it was necessary that it should be known that we might learn the power that is to usward who believe. Therefore a mighty angel rolls back the stone, little caring for the penalty attached to the breaking of the emperor's seal, and—striking

terror into the hearts of the soldiers who, fearing no natural foes, were impotent against this manifestation of spiritual power—shews that Christ was already risen from the dead! He that sitteth in the heavens had laughed, the Lord had had his foes in derision. What could Satanic malice or human empire do against the power of God? Righteously now can death's domain be visited, its bonds burst, and this blessed Man be taken up, who, under the judgment of God was dead for sins, *not his own*. Righteously can He be set by God at His own right hand in the heavenlies, far above all that which seems to us to be the very summit of all height. "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." Here therefore, at the grave of Christ is set forth the grandest display

of the exceeding greatness of the power of God. This is the power which is to usward who believe. Surely, with such a power, with God at our back, we need fear nothing! All power, human and devilish, was annulled when the blessed Christ of God was raised from the dead and put as a Man at God's right hand. That we may *know* this power is the desire of the apostle for us here.

But not only is that power presented to us objectively as it wrought in Christ, but it is shewn that we, who believe in Him, have been the subjects of it also. There has been the working of the same

POWER UPON US.

We were not, as Christ was, actually dead for sins, but we were spiritually dead—dead *in* sins. But the power that raised up Christ; a power of new creation, has

“ quickened us together with Christ, (ch. ii. 5). Now you cannot apply the term “ quickened ” to Christ in any other way than as to His body, at the moment when He was raised from the dead, and then He is said to be quickened by the Spirit. (1 Pet. iii. 18.) Christ was always the heavenly Man upon earth, but now his intercourse with the earth positively ceases, save as He is interested in His heavenly saints, and this kept Him upon earth for forty days, that He might gather up their affections and carry them with Himself up to Heaven.

It may be well to note here that new creation is set forth in this chapter in three parts, viz.—

1. New life. We are quickened together *with* Christ. “ If any man be in Christ there is new creation.” In that He lives, He lives unto God ; and we are alive in Him, quickened into the cir-

cumstances into which Christ is quickened. The power of God in new creation has wrought upon the saints, they are born of God. An inner man has been created in them.

2. New position. God "hath raised us up together and made sit together in the heavenlies *in* Christ." Here God sees the saints in Him who is on high, they have ceased to belong to this earth as to their position before God. They have a heavenly position, and their interests on earth are identical with the interests of God.

This operation is still going on, fresh souls becoming the subjects of the power of God in new creation, until the whole shall be completed. Then the passage will be literally and actually fulfilled, and all will be caught up together and seated with Christ in the heavenlies; the same new creation power applying itself then to our bodies,

as already has been applied to our spirits. Then, whether the body is raised from the dead or quickened (Rom. viii. 11.) it will have been the subject of the same power which raised Christ from the dead.

There will be no doubt then, in any heart, as to our being the subjects of this power, indeed all subjective truth carries consciousness with it. Can we be the subjects of God's power and not know it? Objective truth cannot be circumscribed, it is ever true for all believers, but subjective truth is limited in each individual believer to his own practical apprehension. Therefore, as far as we are the subjects of this power we must be conscious of it, although allowance has still to be made for false teaching. Yet God will shortly display all the love and mercy that has led Him thus to work upon us, and shew the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward

us through Christ Jesus. But new life and new position demand

3. New character. We are created unto good works which God hath before prepared that we should walk in them. A moral manifestation of all that God hath wrought for and with us, being a divinely and beautifully suitable, present answer to it.

But running side by side with all this teaching as to the mighty power of God, we have the apostle's earnest desire that it may be applied to the saints. This desire is especially expressed in the end of ch. iii. that we too may learn the way of its application and join with him in desire for it. This way is

PRAYER.

He thought it necessary, not only to teach the saints about the power, but, that God by his

Spirit might apply that power to them he turns to Him in prayer. This, beloved, is the great means of bringing in the power of God, whether by the teacher or by the saints. The apostle prays himself in chs. i. and iii., and exhorts to prayer for himself and all saints in ch. vi., and neither you nor I will know what the present power of God is unless we are men of prayer. It is the man of prayer that is the man of power, and not the man of knowledge only.

Why do we not better know what God's present power is to enable us to enter into our immense privileges? Surely our shame is that we are not sufficiently in the habit of prayer. Oh! if we only felt aright the reality of the thing, should we not be a little more careful henceforth to cultivate this habit? How keenly alive the apostle was to this, our passage shews. With him it was not enough

that we should know the power that is toward us as manifested in the resurrection of Christ ; nor that we should be conscious that we have been the subjects of that same power working with us ; but he prays that we may also know that

POWER IN US.

A power lifting us into the realm of spiritual things as a present and continual reality, so that we may understand all the spiritual blessings wherewith we have been endowed. This is his desire for the saints, for this he bows his knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom every family in heaven and earth is named.

The apostle is not teaching now, he is *praying*. He prays that the power he desires to see in exercise may be applied to us thus.

Do we ever pray for it? How little there is of such prayer privately! How little at the prayer meetings! Were it more so, should we not rise strengthened in the inner man? Would not the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ grant us, "according to the riches of His glory"—always Paul's standard—"to be strengthened with power by His Spirit in the inner man?"

Do we believe that we have an inner man? We know a great deal about the outer man and how to cater for it, but the apostle prays, that we may be empowered by the Spirit in the inner man. That the inner man might be renewed was his desire, though the outer man perished. We cannot take the outer man into heaven, and good would it be for us to take a little more care of the inner man, to pray that it may be well fed upon the love of God and sustained in His purposes and

counsels ; this would lead to growth. Thus empowered by the Spirit,

CHRIST DWELLS IN THE HEART BY
FAITH.

He practically lives in the affections. Faith makes all that the Spirit works in us a present practical reality, and all the tendrils of the being entwine around Him who is the centre of the counsels of God. We need strengthening for this, or it would burst up the vessel.

This leads on to being rooted and founded in love. God's love is here in view, that which is the source of everything and is general in its bearing. A tree well rooted draws its nourishment from the earth, and a building is founded on the earth ; but the saints draw their nourishment from love, and are established in love, the very nature of God. If we would walk

as heavenly men, we must be rooted and founded in love, the omnipotent love of God.

But this love embraces all, hence he prays that we may comprehend with all saints, "what is the breadth and length and depth and height," it does not say of what. Doubtless it is the whole counsel of God, for His glory in Christ; not the mystery only, that is but part of what he wants them to comprehend. The assembly is the fulness of Him that filleth all in all; he prays that we may know the "all in all" that Christ fills. It goes beyond the assembly; we need to know both the place which the assembly has in the counsels of God and our place in the assembly.

Thus enlarged as to the counsels of God, he prays that we may know that which is peculiarly known by the assembly, "the love of Christ which passeth know-

ledge." This is not to know the unknowable, but to know more and more of that love which still surpasses all our knowledge of it. We may know daily more of it to the day of our departure from this earth, and when that scene bursts upon us we shall say—The half hath not been told us!

But the petitions deepen! "That ye may be filled into all the fulness of God." Not filled with it, which would mean the infinite compassed by the finite, but filled into, like a bowl floating in and filled with the mighty ocean. Always in the fulness, and ever freshly filled with it.

Wonderful petitions! Surely God given! The perfection of state as known in Christ is the object of desire. But God is able to accomplish even this in us, though He alone. This the last two verses shew, as they shew also that the ultimate object in the apostle's

mind is that even *now* there should be in the assembly

GLORY TO GOD.

That God is able to do exceeding abundantly above all we ask or think is often quoted, but in what connection? What is He able to do? Surely that which Paul prayed about. It is not easy circumstances. It is not health or providential deliverance, right as such petitions may be at times.

Here, all is in connection with that which belongs to Christ. It is not even that He will put us up there in the glory, this He will surely do. But what is here asked is glory to God in the assembly by Christ Jesus. May he work this desire in the hearts of His people by His Spirit, that there may be more such petitions from individuals and the assembly, to His glory.

“To Him be glory in the assembly by Christ Jesus, unto all generations of the age of ages. Amen.” This is the great climax of the apostle’s desires. The assembly is the vessel of the glory of God *now* and evermore. So he says, “unto all generations of the age of ages,” that he may take in this present time, during which surely, as in every other age onward, glory should be to God in the assembly by Christ Jesus. To this end he prays for present power to be wrought in us, producing a state suitable to the manifestation of

POWER FROM US.

It is evident that power cannot come from us if it is not in us. If we are not empowered by His Spirit in the inner man, Christ dwelling in our hearts by faith, He cannot use us in any of

the four spheres of the present exercise of that power as referred to in the rest of the epistle, viz :— the assembly, the world, the family, or against spiritual wickedness in the heavenlies. We may know what the power toward us is, also that this power has wrought with us, and yet be dull and inert. That it may be *in* us he prays, so that it may work out from us. Thus may we pray also !

Every exhortation that follows, from ch. iv. on, hangs *directly* upon this, though the fact of Christ being raised from the dead by the power of God is the basis of everything. We may, perhaps, think that we could not sustain the weight of the armour of God apart from the power of his might, but we need the power that raised Christ from the dead made good *in* us by the Spirit, in order that we may fulfil the smallest exhortation in the practical part of this

epistle. How impossible, for instance, is it to walk lowly and meekly apart from this power! Lowliness and meekness do not grow naturally in the fallen human heart. Yet this precedes and is necessary to the manifestation of the power in any of the spheres referred to. It might almost, indeed, be called a first or personal sphere. Certainly if it is not operative in this way, it will not be so in other ways.

But if it is in us, it never can lie dormant, and our responsibility is that it may effectually work out from us. We must remember that there is not only the old and the new "I" in us, but there is the conscious responsible "I" also, and this wonderful display of power toward and with us, makes us responsible for its moral manifestation from us, though this be dependent upon prayer that it may be maintained in us, as we

have seen. It wrought in Paul the prisoner for the administration of the mystery on earth, and he desires that it may work out from the believer in every sphere of relationship in which he is placed here on earth.

We may notice in closing the way the power applies itself in the various spheres referred to in this epistle, viz :—

I. THE ASSEMBLY.

This is the first and most important sphere (Ch. iv. 1-16.); and here the power which raised up Christ from the dead, is to be applied specially in "Using diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace." In order to this and that we may walk worthy of the calling wherewith we are called, which is to be builded together for a habitation of God through the Spirit, we

must first apply the power to ourselves as individuals, "with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love." Not ready to take nor to give offence, for this is the opposite of endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit. Here we need to know all the elements of God's system of truth, that we may be delivered from the numberless systems of error, which lie in the sleight of men, with the cunning craftiness of Satan behind them. The word translated "wiles" in ch. vi. 11., is used here, and shews the origin of those systems which are played off in this world against God's system, where alone the truth is to be found.

2. THE WORLD.

Here again the truth is to be applied personally first. (Ch. iv.

17-v. 21.) The power which raised Christ from the dead is to be used in practically "putting off the old man and putting on the new." We walk in the midst of this present evil age, as the exponents of new creation, although having in us and being surrounded by that which is of the old. In order that we may worthily represent Him in whose image we are created, all that is contrary to Him must be subdued by His power, kept in the place of death, and the great characteristics of the new man be manifested. These characteristics are, Truth, Love and Light.

The truth as it is in Jesus takes the place of all our former unreal condition, so that we are not to walk as other Gentiles walk, but in the power that raised Christ from the dead, to be occupied with the truth. Thus all lying, violence and corruption being put

off, and speaking every man truth with his neighbour, remembering that we are members one of another, we are edified; that which is good proceeding out of the mouth, grace is ministered to the hearers.

Becoming followers of God as dear children, and walking in love as Christ also has loved us, kindness, tender-heartedness and forgiveness take the place of bitterness, wrath and malice. We thus become as a savour of a sweet smell to God, a reproduction of Christ on earth.

They, who were sometimes darkness being now light in the Lord, can have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but should rather reprove them. The light makes all things manifest.

3. THE SOCIAL SPHERE.

That is, the earthly relationships of the heavenly family (Ch. v.

22. - vi. 9.). The power that raised Christ from the dead is needed to bring all these relationships in under the Lord. On the one hand, to exercise the authority delegated by Him to any in these relationships, as under Him, and in it to shew the love which He has Himself manifested. On the other hand, the subjection demanded from those in such relationships, is to be of the character of His own obedience and to Him.

How much prayer is needed here, all must feel, that the conscience and heart of each one may be kept alive in the sense of His demands and of His love.

How good to bring the hearts of the children, for instance, into contact with the heart of God, as set forth in the blessed Lord Jesus Christ! Where dependence is maintained He will uphold the authority of those to whom He has committed it, subduing under

them such as are in the place of subjection.

4. TRUE CHRISTIAN WARFARE.

This is with spiritual wickedness in the heavenlies (Ch. vi. 10-20.). Here again the power is needed subjectively first, as set forth in the girdle, while it reaches to the offensive weapon, the sword. Easy it is to recognize that nothing but the power which raised Christ from the dead can enable us even to sustain the *weight* of the panoply of God. How much more is it needed to fight the enemy who opposes heavenly truth more than all else! But it may be noted that, while wicked spirits are the opponents and heavenly truth the contention, the scene of conflict is on earth. Hence the administration of that wonderful mystery of the gospel, the assembly, for which Paul was an

ambassador in bonds becomes the centre of the conflict.

Here we are thrown again upon our faces, that we may pray always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, for all saints, and for those who in any measure seek to administer to-day amid weakness and confusion this blessed mystery.

May the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, grant unto his beloved saints to-day, the earnest desire and prayer, that we may be strengthened with power by His Spirit in the inner man, Christ dwelling in our hearts by faith, that there may be more glory to Him in the assembly by Christ Jesus, in these, its last moments upon earth.

G. J. S.

BY THE SAME :

The Heavenly Jerusalem.

Notes on Galatians. (Six Lectures.)

Provision for the Wilderness. (Six Lectures.)

Wise or Foolish. Matt. xxv.

Thrice Lost. Luke xv.

Christ's Position. Matt. iii.

Christ's Temptation. Matt. iv.

The Priest, His Consecration.

The Levite, His Sanctification.

The Meat Offering.

Clean and Unclean.

The Whole Armour of God.

Between the Two Evenings.

Be Filled with the Spirit.

The Pledge, Power, Protection, and Guidance of the Spirit.

God's Year of Release.

The Stowaway.