

## **St Paul's Church Feilding Sermon Sunday 3 July 2022 by Bobby Kusilifu**

Christ is the head over all! Ephesians 1:19-23

Today we are looking at the power that we have as Christians. We briefly talked about power already in verse 19, but Paul spends the next three verses 20-23, explaining more about the power we have. In verse 19 we saw that this power is active and continuously working, demonstrating that God is certainly all powerful and that all power only belongs to him. And it is purely one of the characteristics of our God. God is powerful as he is holy.

Paul himself could not comprehend this, let alone explain what it means. However, Paul goes on to give us some concrete examples of how great this power is.

In verse 20, Paul illustrates how God used his power when he raised Jesus from the dead. Do you know any power of this world that can do that? Only God has the kind of power that gives life. Paul goes on to say, that not only did that power raise Jesus from the dead but that Jesus Christ was given a seat at the right hand of God in the heavenly realms. He was not just raised from the dead, he was also given the right to rule at God's right hand! When Jesus ascended into heaven to sit at the right hand of God, what this really means is that he ascended to his throne to rule and reign over this earth, so that he could bring the reality of heaven down to this earth. The rest of the letter explains exactly how Jesus does this - but Paul gives a foreshadowing of how this occurs right here in these verses.

In verse 21, we see the beginning of what it means for Jesus to rule over the earth. It says, Jesus is seated, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. In Paul's day, these five words—rule, authority, power, dominion and name—described different levels of spiritual beings. It is kind of like a spiritual hierarchy. The terms Paul uses here refer to spiritual realities that govern, guide, direct and they also could refer to earthly rulers, nations, institutions, and powers that dominate this world. A proper understanding of these terms is critically important for understanding spiritual warfare in Ephesians 6:10-20, and we will discuss the terms more when we get there. For now, we just need to understand and be thankful that Jesus is in control. Paul's point here is that we don't have to worry about these things. He that is in us is greater than he that is in the world. Christ is far above all rule, authority, power, dominion and name or title.

This is exactly what Paul is emphasising in verse 22, that God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything. God took all the things that are in this world, and placed them under the feet of Jesus. That is, Jesus was given authority over them. Jesus, as Paul writes, was appointed to be the head over everything. But as we look around at the world, does it look like Jesus is in control of everything? Are governments and leaders and institutions and all the other power structures of our world doing things in the way Jesus would do them? Hardly! So how is it that all such things have been placed under the authority of Jesus? How can all such things be brought under the control of Jesus so that they do what Jesus wants done in this world? Paul gives us the answer in verse 23.

In verse 23, Paul continues by saying, though Jesus is the answer to the problems of the world, the church is the solution. The church is how Jesus accomplishes changes in the world. Jesus is in control of the power structures of this world by calling and leading the church to make the changes in this world that Jesus wants. In other words, to the same extent that the church steps up and does what we are called to do, to that same extent Jesus exerts authority over the world. Alternately, when the power structures of this world are doing things contrary to the ways of Jesus, this only means that the church needs to rise up to its task to show the world and lead the world into the change Jesus wants to bring into the world.

So, we who are the church need to recognise the power and authority that we have in Christ to really step up in faith and with confidence and lead the world the way Jesus wants. Sadly, the church often follows the world when in reality, the church should be leading the world into the ways of Jesus Christ. When the church steps up as the body of Christ, we, as the hands, feet, and voice of Jesus Christ, will fill everything in every way and the power of God will flow through us to transform this world in ways that Jesus wants and desires. Jesus is the head of the universe and the head of the church, and as such, the church fills the world and transforms it into the ways of the Kingdom of God. This tells us something very fundamental, it tells us what the purpose of the church is. That we exist for the sake of Christ.

As we are brought together by the gospel of Jesus Christ, we are fulfilling God's plan for his universe. This means that church isn't only about what things are like now, it's about heading for the future, when all things will be summed up in Christ. It also tells us that the church is a heavenly reality. Christ is now risen from the dead and seated with God in the heavenly places. So, we can't make sense of church just by thinking about it as an earthly reality in the here and now. Church is not just an institution or community. It is a purposeful, future-focused, heavenly reality, because it is the fulfilment of the risen Christ who is now ruling in the heavenly realms. This is the first thing we need to know. Christ, the head of all things, is for the church. And the church is for Christ, who is the head of all things. Let's never forget that.

### **For reflection**

How might these verses change the way we think about church?

Grace and peace to you all,  
Bobby