

from the dead. (Acts 17:30–31)

Note also Yeshua’s teaching regarding His role as Judge in the final day:

Many will say to Me on that day, “Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?” And then I will declare to them, “I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.” (Matt 7:22–23)

Kistemaker, speaking of the “surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe,” writes:

The words “with respect to us who believe” show that this power is exerted in the interest of believers, of no one else. They alone receive the inheritance.

Indeed, faith in the Messiah Yeshua is the only way by which a sinner may stand righteous and justified before God. Those who postulate another message than this are preaching “another gospel” which is actually no “gospel” (good news) at all (2Cor 11:4; Gal 1:6–7).

19b–21 *These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might which He brought about in Messiah, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come.*

The NASB, in attempting to make the long sentence of vv. 15–23 understandable in English, has added the words “These are” at the beginning of our text, in order to show the logical connection to the previous context. Having encouraged the Ephesian believers by telling them of what his prayer for them consists, he now emphasizes that these eternal blessings all rest upon the historical and irrefutable fact of Yeshua’s resurrection. The hope of His calling, the riches of His inheritance in the saints, and the surpassing greatness of His power to bring about His eternal plan for all who believe, all require the omnipotent, all powerful ability of God to bring it to pass. And this power was demonstrated in the resurrection of Yeshua from the dead. Indeed, the resurrection of

Yeshua is the keystone of our faith.

in accordance with the working of the strength of His might... – This phrase opens with the Greek preposition *κατά* (*kata*), which, in this context, denotes the idea of “in proportion to” or “in conformity to,” or, as the NASB has it, “in accordance with.” The point Paul wishes us to realize is straightforward. The purpose of God on behalf of all who believe in Him and are therefore “in Messiah,” will be accomplished in full proportion to or accordance with the infinite power and authority of God.

Paul uses three words in this phrase to describe the “strength” or “power” of God. The first is *ἐνέργεια* (*energeia*, “working”) from which we derive our English word “energy.” According to some scholars, this noun, derived from the verb *ἐνεργέω* (*energeō*), always describes power that is “actual power” rather than “potential.”¹ *Energeia* is not found in the Lxx of the canonical books. It is found eight times in the Apostolic Scriptures, always in Pauline epistles, and always to describe supernatural power. One time it is used of satanic power (2Thess 2:9) and the remaining seven of God’s power.² A close synonym of *energeia* is the Greek word *δύναμις* (*dunamis*), which, however, denotes potential power. We derive our English word “dynamite” from this Greek word. Paul’s use of this word (*energia*) would highlight in our context that God’s power is active, not reserved or kept inactive.

The second word Paul uses in this phrase is *κράτος* (*kratos*, “strength, might”) and is often used to denote physical strength and is used to denote strength of an army in war as well as the power of a ruler or king.³ In the Apostolic Scriptures it is used in doxologies to extol the power or dominion of God (1Pet 5:11; Jude 25; Rev 5:13) and of Yeshua (1Tim 6:16; 1Pet 4:11; Rev 1:6; 5:13). In our text it emphasizes the sovereignty of God in accomplishing all of His holy will. Nothing stands in His way of completing His purposes.

The third word in our phrase is *ἰσχὺς* (*isxus*), carrying the sense of “ability to function effectively, strength, power, might.”⁴ This emphasizes that God is actively carrying out His purposes and His decreed plan. While to mankind it may sometimes seem as though God is inactive, Paul teaches us just the opposite. God is bringing about His plan

1 See Hoehner, *Ephesians*, pp. 269–70.

2 Referring to God’s power directly (Eph 1:19; 3:7; Phil 3:21; Col 1:29; 2:12; 2Thess 2:11) or indirectly (Eph 4:16)

3 BDAG, “κράτος,” p. 565.

4 BDAG, “ἰσχυς,” p. 484.

and nothing is causing Him to delay nor can anything block His way.

Why does Paul pile word upon word, utilizing the primary terms in Greek to describe “strength, power, might, etc.”? He does so to emphasize once again that not only is God able to do all of His holy will, and thus to carry out His determined plan, but that even when things appear to us as impossible, God is able to overcome anything that might seem to us like an obstacle standing in the way of His carrying out His promises. And the tangible, historical, overwhelming proof of God’s sovereign power is clearly seen in the resurrection of Yeshua.

(20) *which He brought about in Messiah, when He raised Him from the dead* – Having revealed the three primary requests of his prayer for the Ephesians believers, i.e., that they would know (1) “the hope of His calling,” (2) “the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints,” and (3) “the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe,” Paul describes in this verse the full measure of God’s omnipotent power, and he does so by pointing us to the resurrection of Yeshua on the third day and subsequently His ascension to the right hand of the Father. The resurrection of Yeshua and His ascension to the very throne of heaven are the historical events by which He proclaimed to all people that He was the anointed King of the universe and the High Priest representing His people before the Father.

The opening word “which” (ὅν, *hein*) has as its antecedent the noun τὴν ἐνέργειαν (*tēn energeian*), “the working,” meaning that the power of God to work in and on behalf of all who are His children is the very power which raised Yeshua from the dead and proclaimed Him to be the victor over all of His enemies. Consider the glory of Paul’s teaching here: God works in each and every believer with the same power He exercised in Yeshua by raising Him from the dead and seating Him at His right hand, so that all things are subjected to Him.

Yeshua’s resurrection is the keystone of our faith, for if He had not risen, then our faith is worthless. In fact, the resurrection of Yeshua from the dead is proof of the final resurrection itself of mankind, as Paul asserts in 1Cor 15.

Now if Messiah is preached, that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, not even Messiah has been raised; and if Messiah has not been raised, then our preaching is vain, your faith also is vain. (1Cor 15:12-14)

Note well the logic in Paul's statement. He reasons that if Messiah has been raised from the dead, then this proves that there will be a general resurrection of mankind. Thus, the very power of God by which Yeshua was raised from the dead is the power that will bring about the final resurrection of mankind. This teaching of Paul to the Corinthians likewise emphasizes that the power by which Yeshua was raised from the dead is the very power of God by which He will cause all who are His to become more and more conformed to the very likeness of His Son, Yeshua.

For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; (Rom 8:29)

As noted above in v. 19, the phrase “the greatness of His power” utilizes the Greek word *δύναμις* (*dunamis*, “power”) which generally carries the sense of “potential power,” while the word *ἐνέργια* (*energia*, “the working”) in the phrase “the working of the strength of His might” denotes kinetic power, that is, power in action. Even as Yeshua's resurrection proved His victory over sin and death (the last enemy, cf. 1Cor 15:26), so this same victorious power of the Almighty is that which is, by His Spirit, at work in all who have been called into His family through faith in the risen and reigning Messiah, Yeshua.

This is the same truth that Paul proclaims in the opening verses of Romans, regarding Yeshua Messiah,

Who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh, Who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness, Yeshua Messiah our Lord... (Rom 1:3–4)

And the very fact that the resurrection of Yeshua not only is the irrefutable proof that He is the eternal, holy, omnipotent Son of God and Messiah promised by the prophets, but it likewise guarantees to all who are in Him, that this same divine and infinite power is able to overcome everything necessary to enable our ongoing sanctification and cause us to persevere in Him unto eternal life. Knowing this truth and applying it to our daily lives is why Paul has given us this inspired text. To “know Him and the power of His resurrection” (Phil 3:10) is to live our lives with an unshakable assurance that we are secure in Him and that nothing can separate us from His empowering love (Rom 8:35ff).

It is important to note that here, once again, we are confronted with

the wonderful mystery of the incarnation. For in our texts, Paul clearly asserts that it was the Father Who raised Yeshua from the dead. Yet Yeshua Himself said:

For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life so that I may take it again. No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father.” (Jn 10:17–18)

Here we see the unity of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, for “it is the Spirit Who gives life” (Jn 6:63). The distinct roles of the Father, the Son and the Spirit are yet, in reality, the One God working in accordance with His sovereign plan.

...and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, – Paul is clearly referencing Ps 110 when he speaks of the fact that the Father “seated Him at His right hand.” Yeshua Himself used Ps 110 to defeat the naysayers who questioned whether He could be the promised Messiah.

Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Yeshua asked them a question: What do you think about the Messiah, whose son is He?” They said to Him, “The son of David.” He said to them, “Then how does David in the Spirit call Him ‘Lord,’ saying, THE LORD SAID TO MY LORD, SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND, UNTIL I PUT YOUR ENEMIES BENEATH YOUR FEET? If David then calls Him ‘Lord,’ how is He his son?” No one was able to answer Him a word, nor did anyone dare from that day on to ask Him another question. (Matt 22:41–46)

He also quotes Ps 110 at His trial before the High Priest and parallels it with Dan 7:13.

Again the high priest was questioning Him, and saying to Him, “Are You the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?” And Yeshua said, “I am; and you shall see THE SON OF MAN SITTING AT THE RIGHT HAND OF POWER, and COMING WITH THE CLOUDS OF HEAVEN.” Tearing his clothes, the high priest said, “What further need do we have of witnesses? (Mk 14:61–63)¹

On the basis of Yeshua’s use of Ps 110, Thielman suggests:

1 Cf. Matt. 26:64, and Luke 22:69.

The psalm probably played a role in first-century debates about the identity of the Messiah even beyond Christian circles, as Jesus's use of it in debates with His opponents and at his Jewish trial implies.¹

That Yeshua is described as sitting at the right hand of God must be understood as meaning "the place of power and authority." Note, for instance, this use of "the right hand" in the Song of the Sea.

Your right hand, O LORD, is majestic in power, Your right hand, O LORD, shatters the enemy. (Ex 15:6)

Moreover, the word translated "heavenly places" (*ἐπουρανίους, epouraniois*) does not primarily denote a specific location but rather describes the "dimension" in which all spiritual powers exist, i.e., whether those giving glory to God and bringing about His purposes (cf. 1:3) or those who are against God and seek to undermine His purposes (cf. 6:12).

Likewise, the posture of Yeshua sitting at the right hand of the Father, is also a metaphor, indicating that the work of offering Himself as a sacrifice has been completed. "Sitting" can be a picture of being at rest. But most assuredly Yeshua is active in the heavenly realm, for "He always lives to make intercession for us" (Heb 7:25), and this is pictured when Stephen sees Yeshua "standing," a posture of activity (Acts 7:55). But "sitting" can also denote a posture of authority, for a king is pictured as sitting upon his throne.

Note Calvin's comments:

This passage shews plainly, if any one does, what is meant by the right hand of God. It does not mean any particular place, but the power which the Father has bestowed on Christ, that he may administer in his name the government of heaven and earth. It is idle, therefore, to inquire why Stephen saw him standing, (Acts 7:55), while Paul describes him as sitting at God's right hand. The expression does not refer to any bodily posture, but denotes the highest royal power with which Christ has been invested. This is intimated by what immediately follows, far above all principality and power: for the whole of this description is added for the purpose of explaining what is meant by the right hand.²

1 Thielman, *Ephesians*, p. 107.

2 Calvin, *Ephesians*, pp. 215–16.

(21) *far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named* – Here, once again, Paul has piled word upon word in order to express the infinite power which Yeshua owns by His own divine being, a power that dwarfs any other power in the whole of the universe. His authority is “far above” (ὕπεράνω, *huperanō*) all other authority found in the universe. *Huperanō* is found three times in the Apostolic Scriptures: twice in Ephesians (1:21; 4:10) and once in Hebrews (Heb 9:5). It describes a position above other objects but can also carry the sense of “far above,” as in the Lxx of Deut 26:19 in which God declares that He will set His chosen nation Israel “high above all nations” (καὶ εἶναι σε ὑπεράνω πάντων τῶν ἐθνῶν). In this context, the majority of English translations¹ are right to translate *huperanō* as “far above” when describing Yeshua’s authority in relationship to all other powers in the universe.

The same is true by Paul’s use of four nouns describing power and authority. “Rule and authority and power and dominion” (ἀρχῆς καὶ ἐξουσίας καὶ δυνάμεως καὶ κυριότητος) is finalized by “every name that is named” (παντὸς ὀνόματος ὀνομαζομένου). While these terms are surely comprehensive of any and all rulers, authorities, and any who wield power and authority over others, it seems most likely that Paul intends these to designate those powers and ruling entities that are the enemies of God. For in 6:12 Paul teaches:

For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. (Eph 6:12)

The primary thrust of this passage is clear, that Yeshua is the reigning and sovereign King of the universe, and no power exists that could overpower Him or in any way stand in the way of Him accomplishing His eternal plan of salvation and the defeat of all that is evil. Moreover, Paul may also be combating early Gnosticism by using these terms, for the veneration of angels was part of this heresy. Rather, Yeshua is to receive all honor and glory, for He has a name above all names, meaning He is Himself one with the Father and the Spirit in all aspects of divinity.

...not only in this age but also in the one to come. – This final phrase of our verse is a bold statement of Yeshua’s eternal nature, for His pow-

1 KJV, EVS, NET, NIV, HCBS, NRSV, REB, etc.

er and authority are eternal. This likewise means that all who are in Messiah through faith and the grace of God are kept by the power of Yeshua, our reigning and triumphant King. We are thereby secure in His power, and may appropriate the very power of our redeemer in the spiritual combat in which we are engaged. Thus, Paul is preparing us with this wonderful truth in order to fit us for the spiritual warfare he describes in chapter 6.

22-23 And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the *ekklesia*, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

To “put all things in subjection under His feet”¹ is the obvious result of the authority which Yeshua owns, and Paul is clearly relying upon Ps 8:6 in this verse. And though Ps 8 is specifically speaking of mankind in general as God’s image-bearing rule upon the earth, Paul sees in Yeshua the ultimate Man Who restores mankind to his proper place.

You make him to rule over the works of Your hands; You have put all things under his feet, all sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field, the birds of the heavens and the fish of the sea, whatever passes through the paths of the seas. O LORD, our Lord, How majestic is Your name in all the earth! (Ps 8:6–9)

In our text, the subject of the verb “to subject” (NASB, “put...in subjection”) is the Father. Some might think that such language implies that Yeshua does not Himself have divine authority and power, but only that which is given to Him by the Father. In one sense this is true, for Yeshua willingly submits to the Father, but submission does not imply inferior rank or ability.

We may note similar language in Phil 2:8–11.

Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, so that at the name of Yeshua EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every

1 The Greek would be more woodenly translated “And all things He subjected under His feet” (και πάντα υπέταξεν υπό τους πόδας αυτού).