

# DEEP IN SCRIPTURE

*Verses & Notes August 8, 2007*

*Ephesians 1: 18-23*

- 18:        "... having the eyes of your hearts enlightened,  
            that you may know  
            what is the hope to which he has called you,  
            what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and
- 19:        what is the immeasurable greatness of his power in us who believe,  
            according to the working of his great might
- 20:        which he accomplished in Christ  
            (1) when he raised him from the dead and  
            (2) made him sit at his right hand in the heavenly places,
- 21:        far above all rule and authority and power and dominion,  
            and above every name that is named,  
            not only in this age  
            but also in that which is to come; and
- 22:        (3) he has put all things under his feet and  
            (4) has made him the head over all things
- 23:        for the Church,  
            which is his body,  
            the fullness of him who fills all in all.

## Introduction:

- The familiar great cry of Easter is the proclamation, "He is risen!" Jesus of Nazareth, betrayed, arrested, falsely tried, scourged, crucified, and buried, is not dead. He is alive, and this news changed the world. It changed his cowardly followers into bold, courageous leaders and martyrs. But this Easter proclamation is certainly not a once a year message: it is the message that should change us, every single day of our lives. Yet, has it become so familiar that it has lost it's meaning? This is part of what we will discuss today on **Deep In Scripture**.

## Discussion:

- Welcome....website ... Phone numbers ... special: "The Three Conversions of the Spiritual Life"
- We continue in Ephesians from one long sentence to another! Verses 15-23 are one long sentence!
- **Today: vss. 18-23, "Two Converts critique a Clergyman"...**
  - My Easter sermon, 1990...
  - Focus: **"The Power of the Resurrection"**
    - The central truth of our faith, too often neglected or even denied...
    - Mostly (amazingly) right on! However, at least one major mistake.

## The resurrection of Jesus Christ points us to...

### I. The \_\_\_\_\_ POWER\_\_\_\_\_ of God (19-20a)

*"what is the immeasurable greatness of his power in us who believe,  
according to the working of his great might  
which he accomplished in Christ  
when he raised him from the dead"*

- "working" & "accomplished" from same root "*energeo*" which generally refers to supernatural activity;
- The supernatural ability / power of God is demonstrated in the resurrection;
- Therefore, the life-changing / world-changing implication of "He is risen!"

## II. The \_\_\_\_\_ PERSON \_\_\_\_\_ of Jesus (19-22)

19: *what is the immeasurable greatness of his power in us who believe, according to the working of his great might*

20: *which he accomplished in Christ*

*(1) when he raised him from the dead and*

*(2) made him sit at his right hand in the heavenly places,*

21: *far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named,*

*not only in this age*

*but also in that which is to come; and*

22: *(3) he has put all things under his feet and*

*(4) has made him the head over all things*

*for the Church,*

- This person in whom they have come to believe
  - Is no mere good teacher or prophet;
  - If so, he would have been a false messiah, a liar!
  - Who was he, then? Always an enigma for Jews or Greeks:
  - (Also, illustrates the problem of sola Scriptura)
    - 1 Cor 1:21-24  
*"For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe. For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God."*
    - Colossians 1:15-20  
*"He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation; for in him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or authorities -- all things were created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. He is the head of the body, the Church; he is the beginning, the first-born from the dead, that in everything he might be pre-eminent. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross."*
    - Philippians 2:5-11  
*"Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."*

## III. The \_\_\_\_\_ IMPORTANCE \_\_\_\_\_ of the Church (23)

*"for the Church,*

*which is his body,*

*the fullness of him who fills all in all."*

- In my Evangelical Protestant sermon, I sidestepped the point of this passage!
  - My "fill in the blank answer" was: "The PURPOSE of the Church"
    - I said, "I think sometimes people wonder as they either gaze at this church or as they come into this building, 'What is this place all about? What is the purpose of our gathering?' Is it this building?' Is it the institution?' God says very clearly in Scripture what the purpose of the Church is, and the purpose of our gathering is because you and I are to go forth and tell people that Jesus is alive."

- This certainly is partially true, but I sidestepped any discussion of what is the Church to which Paul is referring, by quickly drawing attention of our local congregation.
    - Instead, I focused on the “purpose” of the Church, which Paul does not address in this passage.
  - In my sermon, I shifted to a discussion of Matthew 28: “After Jesus had risen, he gathered with his disciples. Did he say, ‘Go forth and make committees’? Or ‘Go forth and establish an institution’? Or ‘Go forth and build the most beautiful buildings ever seen’? Or ‘Go forth and make money’? Is that what he said. No. He said, ‘Go forth and make disciples,’ and what does it mean to make disciples? To tell other people the Easter message of the resurrection. This is the purpose of the Church.”
    - What I said was true and false:
      - In the immediate context, it is true... and I was making allusions to corruption throughout Christendom;
      - But this is an argument from silence, presuming that Jesus gave his apostles no instructions concerning the future of the Church...
- In the context of St. Paul’s letter, the correct point is ... **The IMPORTANCE of the Church:**
  - The Church is the pinnacle of the expression/accomplishment/purpose of God’s power:
 

*“according to the working of his great might which he accomplished in Christ*

*(1) when he raised him from the dead and*

*(2) made him sit at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come; and*

*(3) he has put all things under his feet and*

*(4) has made him the head over all things **for the Church,***
  - Elsewhere he will refer to one of the purposes: Eph 3:9-10
 

*“To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make all men see what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things; that **through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places.**”*

#### **IV. The \_\_\_\_\_ EMPOWERMENT \_\_\_\_\_ of the believer (18-19)**

*“having the **eyes of your hearts enlightened,** that you may **know** what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power...”*

- In my Protestant sermon, I was basically correct, but in a way, more than I knew:
  - In emphasizing, “The Empowerment of the Believer,” I said, “The message of the resurrection is more than a mere message, because it is a very personal message. It is a message that is for each one of us because it proclaims that the resurrection has power for our lives. In the resurrection, we are forgiven of our sins. In the resurrection, we are promised eternal life. But even more than that, Scripture says that in the resurrection the same power that brought Christ again from the dead empowers our lives to be the kinds of people God wants us to be, to break those old habits, to be faithful people.”

- As I hear myself 17-years later, I realize that I was already struggling with my Calvinist presumptions. From my studies and experience, I knew that other Protestant ministers interpreted these & other passages radically different than I did. In the confines of my church, I was preaching a call to holiness that was different than any of my Presbyterian pastor friends, & I was preaching a call to evangelization & discipleship radically different than any of the leaders of my denomination.
- Yet I too often focused “empowerment” for the purpose of evangelization: we were converted solely by grace, and now that we were saved, our primary purpose was evangelization.
- But here, St. Paul was praying that these newly baptized Gentile believers might come to “know” the power and promises of God in a deeper/ personal way, not just to evangelize but as he says earlier that they might be *“holy and blameless in His sight”* and as he will say later in chapter 3:18-19, that they *“...may have power to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.”*

## V. The        **IMPORTANCE**        of believing (19) *“...in us who believe”*

- I turned this text into a pseudo alter-call sermon!
- I preached, “Paul said in this text that the power of the resurrection is available for ‘us who believe.’ Too often we try and apply Christian principles to our life before we are one with Christ. But the message of Scripture is that we must be believers.”
  - I was referring to those who put the cart before the horse, who have a self-focused faith, who live & practice their faith primarily for self-gain...
- I then went on to impose my Evangelical understanding of salvation by applying Romans 10: “Paul says clearly, “if you confess with your lips”—in other words, if you go out and make disciples, if you tell other people about Jesus—“if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.” ...Now I know that there’s a few of you like me, who were brought up in the church and you went along the manufacturing line, and were baptized, catechized, became leaders, but if you were like me, it is very possible to be in the church and a part of the church but never getting to that point of believing. You see, sometimes we just affirm the reality of Christ just like we affirm the existence of the president in Washington. But believing in Christ is more than that—it’s believing in your heart, which means giving yourself to Jesus, affirming that he’s your Savior and Lord, and saying, “Jesus, all that I know of you, I give to you and I trust you with my life.”
  - This is basically true, but probably not St. Paul’s Emphasis; he was not leading an alter call to unbelievers; rather he was speaking to baptized believers, praying that the graces & gifts they already have might flourish in their lives.

## **YET, in the busyness of our lives, we may take these five truths for granted; we may forget the significance of our baptism & of the resurrection of Christ:**

- The power of God
- The Person of Jesus
- The Importance of the Church
- The Empowerment of the believer
- The Importance of believing.