

BECOMING A PEOPLE OF GRACE

STUDY FIVE

What Is Christ Doing Now . . . and Why?

Ephesians 1:18–23

Christ's presence, plan, and power are available to every child of God. But if we're not careful, we'll live as though we have never met Christ and didn't need His power. We must learn how to be connected and stay connected to a surpassing power that is so phenomenal there aren't words to describe it.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

HAVE you ever turned on a faucet and no water came out, not even a drop? Or flipped a wall switch and the lights didn't turn on? Most likely, the problem wasn't with the water source or the power plant, nor was it a faulty valve or switch. Rather, the pipe from the house to the main water line was clogged or an electrical relay had a short. It wasn't a problem with the source but with the connection to the source.

We can have connection problems with our source of spiritual power. The joy of the Lord that once gushed from the tap runs dry, or the light that once guided our way dims and we feel like we're stumbling through life in the dark. Determined to manage on our own, we may tap our own wisdom to make decisions or muster our own strength to tackle challenges. However, no amount of willpower can substitute spiritual power.

When we try harder to handle our own problems, we operate from fleshly self-sufficiency, declaring in so many words, "I can do it myself!" That approach guarantees failure! A better plan is to admit our weakness and focus on reconnecting to our spiritual power source: Jesus Christ.

What power does Christ have now? How is His role related to our spiritual well-being? And how can we connect to Him? Let's find out!



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Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application

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PREPARE YOUR HEART

According to Paul, when God enlightens our hearts, we discover *why* God put us here—“the hope of His calling” (Ephesians 1:18 NASB); we focus on *what* is ours—“His inheritance in the saints” (1:18 NASB); and we rely on who empowers us—“the surpassing greatness of *His* power *toward us* who believe” (1:19 NASB, emphasis added). God’s power is available to us through Christ.

In what areas of your life do you need His power? Bring these needs to the Lord in prayer and ask Him to empower you even now as you open His Word.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

Open God’s Word to [Ephesians 1:19–23](#) and read this passage. Look for evidence of God manifesting His power for us through Christ. In Ephesians 1:19, Paul first *describes* God’s power, and then in 1:20–23, Paul *demonstrates* His power in Christ.



Observation: Describing and Demonstrating God’s Power

As Paul describes the greatness of God’s power, his enthusiasm about the subject jumps off the page.



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God's Power Described—Ephesians 1:19

With bold strokes, Paul wrote the adjective, *surpassing*. The Greek word is *huperballo*, a concept that is difficult to translate with a single English word. What adjectives do the New Living Translation and the Amplified Bible use to describe the greatness of God's power in *Ephesians 1:19*? What do you think Paul was communicating about our capacity to measure the greatness of God's power?

Paul elaborated on the word, *power*, with three synonyms: “the *working* of the *strength* of His *might*” (Ephesians 1:19 NASB, emphasis added). The following excerpt from Constable's Notes defines these words:

Power (Gr. *dynamis*) refers to a spiritually dynamic living force. “Working,” “strength,” and “might” or “mighty” further describe this power. These three words describe it as energetic, inherent in God, and able to overcome resistance respectively. This is the power of God that is available to believers.¹

Write down in your own words what Paul was communicating about the multifaceted aspects of God's power. Then we'll examine how God demonstrated the greatness of His power through Christ and made His power available to us.

Paul is saying this: “May they have the kind of dynamic, energizing, forceful motivation that results in their conquering whatever difficulty they encounter—seen and unseen, familiar and unfamiliar, overwhelming and common—whatever it might be, may they know such power.” —Chuck Swindoll



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God’s Power Demonstrated—Ephesians 1:20–23

Jesus Christ personifies the power of God through four significant demonstrations. What are the first two demonstrations of power in *Ephesians 1:19b–20*?

When Christ sat down “at God’s right hand in the heavenly realms” (Ephesians 1:20) He received ultimate authority. How did Paul describe Christ’s authority (1:21)? What was the significance of Paul’s claim about Christ in light of Paul’s situation? Remember, when he wrote these words, Paul was under arrest awaiting a trial with Caesar, who was considered the world’s ultimate authority and worshiped as a god.

After raising Christ from the dead, ascending Him to heaven, and seating Jesus at His side, God demonstrated the greatness of His power in two other ways. Can you find them in *Ephesians 1:22*?



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What power does Christ have now in His position in heaven?

God raised Christ from the dead, seated Him at His right hand, gave Him authority over all things, and placed Him over all things in the church. What a tremendous thought! The Father gave Christ the power, and He now gives it to those who are in Him . . . if we will only connect to Him through Christ! —Chuck Swindoll



Interpretation: Christ as Head of the Church

From the tomb to the throne, Christ ascended to heaven to receive authority over all things—but He did not relate to His followers as if He were a distant deity. He came near us in intimate connection as the Head of the church. In the interpretation phase of *Searching the Scriptures*, we seek to find the meaning of the church's relationship with Christ. What details did Paul give about Christ and His church in *Ephesians 1:22–23*?



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Paul wrote that the church “is made full and complete by Christ” (Ephesians 1:23). What does that mean and *in what ways* does Christ make us full and complete? Consult your resources for the answer, including Chuck’s commentary on Ephesians, *Insights on Galatians, Ephesians*. For an online resource, you can find an explanation of these verses in *Constable’s Notes* at NetBible.org.

How is Christ’s role related to our spiritual well-being? Just as a physical body can’t function without its head, the church would not even exist without Christ. With Christ as the head of the church, God unites us to Christ (Galatians 3:27), gives us life in Him (1 John 5:11), and empowers us to do what only Christ can do through us (Colossians 1:29). We *need* His power, particularly in our struggle against the invisible forces of our enemy, the devil.



Correlation: Our Struggle against Spiritual Forces

Against the forces of darkness, we are helpless without Christ. Read Paul’s description of our foes, and highlight the four categories in which Paul places them:

For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places. (Ephesians 6:12)

Our battlefield is not physical but spiritual, and the devil uses “strategies” against us that are deceptive and powerful (6:11). How do we gain victory? Certainly, not by relying on our own strength. What commands did Paul give in *6:10–11*?



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Our only hope in our struggle against darkness is to connect with our Lord and His power. Let's explore ways to do just that.

Christ showed His strength in His humility, in His dependence on the Father. He modeled for us what the Christian life is about: connection to divine power. Disconnection leads to dysfunction; connection leads to victory. —Chuck Swindoll

Application: Modeling a Life of Dependency

How can we connect to Christ? One way is to follow Christ's own example of connecting with His Father. Jesus lived in constant dependency on the Father. He confessed, "I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself. He does only what he sees the Father doing. Whatever the Father does, the Son also does" (John 5:19). Jesus' attitude of submission models for us how to have a trusting relationship both with Jesus as our Savior and through Him to our heavenly Father.

Paul modeled a similar mind-set. A "thorn in the flesh" afflicted Paul to the point that he *had* to depend on God. Paradoxically, Paul's weakness became a pathway to power greater than he could have mustered if he were healthy. Paul prayed for relief, but the Lord told him, "My grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:9).

What's the key to staying connected? *A prayerful mind-set of constant dependency.* In his message, Chuck Swindoll offered a model prayer that you may wish to use now.

Father, I don't know what today holds, but I know that there are trials I will face. I sense pressure building, and I feel regret for past sins. I ask You to take away all that would hold me back and drain my energy. Give me the kind of motivating force, authority, and power that can come only through Your Son. May the Holy Spirit fill me in such a way that He lives out His victorious, conquering skills through me. Use my voice, my hands, my mind, and my will today as Your tools. Deliver me from the trap of thinking I'm a victim in this intimidating and overwhelming world. Remind me that "greater is He who is in me than he who is in the world." In the name of Jesus, I pray. Amen.

Recite this prayer in the morning and throughout your day. This discipline of prayer will keep you connected to God and His power through Christ. Remember, Christ has ultimate authority over all things. No greater source of power exists on earth or in heaven!



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A FINAL PRAYER

Recall the needs you expressed at the beginning of this study and use this space to write your own prayer of dependency on Christ. You may begin by calling to God from your weakness, “Help me, Lord! Take control. Put Your power to work in me. I depend on You to . . .” How would you like to finish this prayer?

ENDNOTE

1. Thomas L. Constable, “Notes on Ephesians 1:19,” Constable’s Notes, NetBible.org.

