

## **GATEWAY CHURCH NORTHUMBERLAND**

26.7.15

### **The Incomparably Great Power of God - Joss Bray**

In our weekly bible study we are looking at Ephesians at the moment. So Paul is writing to the church in Ephesus and he tells them that he has not stopped giving thanks for them because of their faith and love. Then he goes on to pray for them in some very specific ways.

These are just as relevant to us as they were then. I believe we need to hear this and grasp the truth of it for ourselves. This is transformational stuff!

EPH 1:15 For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, <sup>16</sup> I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers.

<sup>17</sup> I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better.

<sup>18</sup> I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, <sup>19</sup> and his incomparably great power for us who believe.

That power is like the working of his mighty strength, <sup>20</sup> which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, <sup>21</sup> far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come.

<sup>22</sup> And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, <sup>23</sup> which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

## **The Spirit of wisdom and revelation**

So what does Paul ask God to give them - and by extension, to us? - The Spirit of wisdom and revelation.

Why does he ask this? - So that we may know God our Father better

This is what we need desperately. The Spirit already lives in us - we know that when we believe and trust in Jesus - he gives us the Holy Spirit as a seal on our lives. But Paul says we need more.

Now, people we often say they want to be filled with the Spirit and want more of him. But what do we expect when we ask? Is it a great feeling of God's love for us, is it demonstrating the gifts of the spirit like prophecy and tongues, is it joy and peace, is it power to heal people in the name of Jesus, is it boldness to tell others about Him, is it a love for the poor and needy?

Yes of course it is all these things and more - but there is something more fundamental that underpins all of these. Something that unless we have, we are missing out on the fullness of life that Jesus promised us.

It is knowing God better - it is as simple as that. That is the foundation of all of the other good things that God gives us. I want to know God better - do you?

How do we do that? We need to ask to be filled with that Spirit of revelation and wisdom that Paul talked about. If we really want to seek first the kingdom of God, we need to know the King! Everything else will then follow. That's the promise. So let's be really keen to know God better.

## **Enlightenment and hope.**

Paul doesn't leave it at that. He goes on to pray that the eyes of our hearts are enlightened. Literally for light to flood in to our most innermost beings. The light doesn't just shine on us but right inside us - at our core. The light reveals the truth. It shows what was hidden.

Why is this needed? - So that we may know the hope to which he has called us. So what is this hope? - It's the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints.

Now that sounds complicated. But if we look at it bit by bit it helps. We are the saints - made holy and righteous by God. Therefore we are described as his, that is God's - inheritance. It is what he ends up when everything is completed for eternity - when there is a new heaven and a new earth. So that's us with him for ever and it's glorious.

And it goes on to say that there is more - our hope is also in His incomparably great power for us who believe!

Wow - that is a hope worth having isn't it - and it is God's unchangeable plan for us! It's a done deal. It's a hope that isn't just a vague wish that something will happen. It is a hope that is rooted in God, in his word, and our experience of what he has done for us, and what the Spirit shows us.

## **Incomparably great power**

So what about this incomparably great power?

That power is like the working of his mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come.

This power is for us - so what's it like? Well it's about the mighty strength of God. If God created the universe, then there is nothing at all that is comparable to that. Nothing. And that power is for us now and gives us hope.

How can we grasp that? Well, Paul helpfully shows us something a bit more literally down to earth - God demonstrated it when he raised Christ Jesus from the dead. He showed he was Lord of all by dismissing death itself - showing that His power was far above anything that opposes it.

What's more, God seated Him at his right hand - a place of huge authority - in the heavenly realms. Jesus was God's right hand man - to stretch a well known saying. Of course he was far more, but the picture is of Jesus having the delegated authority of the Father. He is now far above every other ruler or authority or power. There is no comparison.

For a while, Jesus submitted himself to earthly authority which killed him - but now, now - he is far above all of that. God the Father has given him everything to be under his feet. That's everything. We can so easily have too small a picture of Jesus. We think of him as God's son sent to the earth because of God's love for the world - to save and redeem it. Absolutely true. We think of him as voluntarily dying for us and taking the consequence all sin for all time on the cross because he loved us. Absolutely true as well. And we think of him as being raised from the dead and ascended into heaven. Again - all true.

But so often we forget, we cannot grasp it, we fail to understand the magnitude of his glory and power, authority, majesty and kingship. He is not bodily here on the earth any more. That's why he sent his spirit. We just have too small a picture of who Jesus actually is.

God has placed all things under his feet - everything. We will see the outworking of that when he comes back in glory - a different sort of glory than the first time - this time to wrap everything up. This time to bring in the full reality of the kingdom of God.

The first time, the good news was that the kingdom of God was near. The second time, there will be no doubt that the kingdom is right here, right now, for everyone to see and experience. And Jesus will be indisputably in charge. It will be the return of the King with no ifs or buts or maybes.

### **The head of the Church**

Jesus is also appointed to be the head of the church - that's us. We are his body on earth. Which is remarkable in itself if you think about it. We act for him here.

But what's more, the church is described as the fullness of Jesus himself! How can this be? Do we feel like we are demonstrating the full nature of Jesus? Well, together, if keep relying on Him as the head, we may start to get there. The last phrase of chapter 1 is the key - He fills everything in every way.

How does he do this? It's through the spirit of God - his Holy spirit - that it is possible and it is happening. We must keep on being filled if we are going to get anywhere close to showing the world who Jesus is. The better we get to know God, the more like him we become. So we come full circle to the beginning of Paul's prayer for all believers.

And finally we need to remember what it says in 1 John 4 - that the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world. There is no power or authority to compare with Jesus - so when hard times come, remember - our destiny is in his hands alone - and it's a certain and glorious one!