Ephesians 1:20-21

Christs' Power Over the Devil

Sermon

Last week, we looked with a forest view at a particular trail within the book of Ephesians where Paul is praying for the reader to intimately know the "immeasurable greatness" of the Fathers' "power", and we saw that the greater purpose of that was to know the "immeasurable grace and kindness" of God forever.

The word for power that is often used in Ephesians is **δυναμις**...a very important word in Greek and especially to the Ephesians as we'll see.

This morning I'm going to break what is considered a cardinal rule of preaching/teaching. I've heard it said like this, "The Greek language (the NT was written in Koine Greek) is like underwear when you preach. Always have it on, it holds everything up, but don't show it to anybody." The reason is that it can easily distract and confuse if it isn't shared with caution. However, there are times when we can get an author's intention by looking at frequently used words and phrases. In Ephesians, words such as **"rulers, authorities, power, dominion, names, and heavenly places"…**these are very important words Paul uses over and over. So last week we looked from a forest view, this week we're back on the trail and we're examining trees that point us in the right direction. Here is another look at the forest trail from 1:19-2:7:

Chiasm slide

We saw last week that this "immeasurable" δυναμις power (1:19) was for the greater purpose of God's "immeasurable grace and kindness" (2:7). This δυναμις power, "raised" and "seated" Jesus in heavenly places (επουρανιοις - 1:20), and that we have been "raised with" and "seated with Christ" in heavenly places (επουρανιοις - 2:6). The heavenly places are a position of authority, rule, and we are "with seated" with Christ in επουρανιοις. Ephesians is about the reconciliation of all things – things in heaven and things on the earth (1:10). The δυναμισ power of Jesus Christ is displayed in His kingly rule (αρχη) as He is seated in the heavenly places (επουρανιοις) over all things. And we now IN CHRIST and WITH CHRIST rule over all that formerly enslaved us IN HIM.

There were strongholds in our lives…fortifications of our enemy that formerly enslaved us. Jesus is now ruling over them.

A stronghold is a place that has been fortified to protect it against attack. In war, a military attacks a strategic location, and upon winning, they establish that location as a "stronghold" to prevent the opposing enemy from taking back ground.

Do you realize that from the day you were born, you were underneath the tyranny of your enemy, the devil? He HATES you because he hates God and you are created in the image of God. Anything that brings God glory or that God loves, he hates. Then you became a child of God through faith in Jesus, and he hates you all the more. You are a danger to his evil plans. You were formerly a stronghold of the devil, now you've been taken over by a new King who rules in επουρανιοις, heavenly

places. Wherever you go, there is the potential for him to lose ground in the war. He was created by God as a glorious angel, but he rebelled against God and took a third of the angels with him (Ezekiel 28; Revelation 12). Now he is known as "Satan" which means "adversary". He is the adversary of God and everything God created that is good, including mankind.

One of the greatest tricks of the devil is to convince the world that he doesn't even exist. Another trick of the devil is to convince Christians that he still has power over them. And by the way, if you aren't fighting against the devil, could it be that you aren't a threat to him? The devil and the demons are not on the same level as God. They are not even close to as powerful as God. They are created angelic beings - God is their creator. They are finite beings - God is infinite. They are limited - God is unlimited in δυναμις power. The only reason that they still exist is that God is allowing for them to exist...for a time. For now, the devil is roaming the face of the earth with his demons, "seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter 5:8-9), desiring to establish strongholds in the lives of humans (demon possession is a very real thing) and to take over strategic locations. He loves to slander God's people ("devil" means "slanderer") and bring them before God with accusations and slander (such as with Job). He incites people to evil (1 Cor. 7:5) while at the same time disguising himself as an "angel of light" (2 Cor. 11:14). He has specific, calculated methods that he has developed over millenia, by which he can cause division and confusion (2 Cor. 2:11). His goal is to lie, to confuse, and to instill fear. He aims, as Jesus said, "to steal, to kill, and to destroy" (John 10:10) and he will not stop. One day his time will be up, God will snap His fingers and summon the devil and the demons for judgment regarding their eternal crimes against God and humanity. He will throw them in the eternal lake of fire where they will face eternal judgment forever and ever. Hell was created for the devil. He wants to pull as many people in with him (pool illustration). He is very intelligent. He knows God's word and therefore how to twist it. He has already lost the war…but he is fighting battles to take back what he has lost.

I have no doubt, that the devil has established a stronghold over the Trevor area. If you are not a follower of Christ, I have no doubt that the devil has established strongholds in your life. If you are a follower of Jesus, I have no doubt that the devil is seeking to take back strongholds that he has lost, and, to build new ones.

That brings us to Ephesians. Ephesians is written to a region known as Asia Minor that was filled with strongholds of the devil. There are certain locations in this world where the devil and demonic activity have established some very real strongholds. Luke, the writer of the book of Acts, tells the story of Paul coming to Ephesus and it is filled with demonic activity. The fact that Luke records so much about demons and demonic activity in Ephesus shows that it had a particular reputation for the occult.

Artemis picture - Artemis was the leading pagan deity in the region of Asia Minor and the temple devoted to Artemis worship resided in Ephesus. She was depicted with multiple breasts or eggs, people are divided about which, but this image of her was meant to demonstrate Artemis as a source of life and fertility. The animals depicted under her were meant to show her power over evil forces. Artemis was a massive source of revenue in Ephesus for peddlers of books on magic and magical items (they've discovered loads of these in the area) used like modern day witchcraft. This was big business. An entire month was devoted to Artemis worship every year and it was a huge source of revenue for the citizens of Ephesus. The practice of Artemis worship and magic was ingrained into the minds of the Ephesians who were now converted to Christ. Artemis was given specific names: "Savior, Lord, Queen of the Cosmos, heavenly goddess"…she was worshipped as, "supreme in divine (δυναμις) power and

position". She was sympathetic and involved in human problems and predicaments of her worshippers – especially over the demonic realm. She was worshipped as a deity possessing cosmic power. Therefore, the area of Ephesus had a particular problem with demonic activity and their solution was Artemis. No wonder that in Ephesians Paul demonstrates the cosmic power of Christ over "all things", "things in heaven, and things on the earth." Look at the screen for an example of a prayer to Artemis:

> **"O Great Artemis of the Ephesians, help! Display your power (**δυναμιν**) upon this young man who has died. For all the Ephesians know, both men and women, that all things (**τα παντα**) are governed by you, and that great powers (**δυναμεις μεγαλαι**) come to us through you. Give now to your servant what you are able to do in this regard." - Acts of John by pseudo-procurus**

Alongside Artemis worship was the practice of magic. The practitioner of magic would often call upon specific "names" to invoke spiritual power. One document unique to Ephesus that has been discovered is the "Ephesia Grammata" – a list of names to invoke power. The Greek word for this type of invocation was ονομαζω – meaning "to invoke names". Listen to this one example:

> **"I conjure you by the great names (**ονοματων**)…you, these holy names (**ονοματα**) and these powers (**δυναμεις**), conform and carry out this perfect enchantment; immediately; immediately; quickly; quickly!" – PGM CI.52**

This practice of magic and the invocation of "names" (ονομαζω) spread to the Jewish people in Asia Minor who even mixed in words associated with God such as Adonai and Sabaoth). **In Acts 19:13 we see a specific account of this with the sons of Sceva:**

> **Then some of the itinerant Jewish exorcists undertook *to invoke the name* (ονομαζω) of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits, saying, "I adjure you by the Jesus whom Paul proclaims. (Acts 19:13)**

- **It doesn't work. The demons respond, "we know Jesus and Paul…but we don't know you!" They had no power (δυναμις) over the demons…and they receive an embarrassing beating for it.**
- **Paul's preaching in Ephesus leads to a massive revival, thousands of dollars worth of magical books and items were burned, and a riot ensued because it was destroying the business of the local magic peddlers…again, you can read about all of this in Acts 19.**
- **Notice the word for "invoke the name" is ονομαζω. This was a common practice to call upon spiritual power (δυναμις) over rulers (αρχη) and authorities (εξουσιας).**

Now…let's turn our attention to the text:

In 1:19 – Paul is praying and wants these Ephesians who have come out of the worship of Artemis to intimately know the "greatness of His power" (μέγεθος τῆς δυνάμεως) – the power of the Father. Who by His δυναμις power raised and seated Jesus at His right hand in the heavenly places (εν τοις επουρανιοις). "in the heavenly places" is a very common phrase in Ephesians. Artemis was said to be (εξ ουρανου – from heaven) - Christ is risen and seated in the heavenly – επουρανιοις – places! Artemis was said to be from heaven, Christ is seated upon the upper heavens! He is seated "at the right hand of God". This is a statement of δυναμις and εξουσιας – power and authority - that refers to Psalm 110:1 (one of the most quoted OT passages by the way in the NT) where David writes of the promised Messiah who would come from his lineage (2 Samuel 7:14) who would rule with – δυναμις

and εξουσιας - power and authority - forever and ever. Jesus quoted this Psalm and asked the religious leaders, "who is King David speaking of when he calls Him Lord?"

> **The Lord says to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool. (Psalm 110:1)**

Notice over whom Jesus is seated:

> **far above all rule (**αρχη**) and authority (**εξουσιας**) and power (**δυναμις**) and dominion (**κυριοτητος – lordship or dominion**)" (Eph. 1:21)**

Again, all very common words used to invoke names and to speak of pagan worship associated with false deities such as Artemis.

Furthermore, Jesus is seated:

> **above every name (**ονομα**) that is named (**ονομαζω – to invoke names**), not only in this age but also in the one to come" (Eph. 1:21)**

The devil is a LIAR and he loves to create false representations of the one true God! Such as Artemis. He loves to trick people into thinking they will have δυναμις power through means other than through Jesus. The last thing the devil wants for you to do is put your faith in Christ…because only in Christ there is δυναμις POWER. Immeasurable power! Power over the devil and over the strongholds that he has taken over. So…he seduces you into finding power in other ways. Paul wants the Ephesians to know, "you don't have to go back to those weak, empty sources of power – those rulers, authorities, powers, and lordships that you once called upon!" Christ is the risen and seated Lord over all names to be named…all representations of false power – Christ is seated over them! Every spiritual evil force, under the feet of Jesus! Paul is saying, "there is no power there Ephesians! Jesus is the risen and seated Lord…Artemis is NOTHING! Your magical spells…USELESS!" Christ is seated over all δυναμις, power, over every εξουσιας, authority, over every αρχη, rule. Satan is described in 2:2 as the

> **ἄρχοντα τῆς ἐξουσίας τοῦ ἀέρος" – literally - "the ruler of the power of the air" (Eph. 2:2**)

Jesus is over every ruler and authority…that includes Satan.

Later in Ephesians the body of Christ, the church, is seen as a display of God's wisdom in reconciling all things through the church to spiritual wicked powers:

> **through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers (αρχη) and authorities (εξουσιας) in the heavenly places (εν τοις επουρανιοις). (Eph. 3:10)**

These are wicked, evil, spiritual foes.

Then in 6:10-18 Paul is going to show the Ephesians how to do war with our defeated foe, and he reminds them that the war we are fighting is not against people - people are enslaved to the real enemy. We fight against the real enemy – Satan and his demons.

> **For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers (αρχη), against the authorities (εξουσιας), against the cosmic powers (κοσμοκρατωρη) over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places (εν τοις επουρανίοις). (Eph. 6:12)**

You remember back in 1:3 the Father has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places (εν τοις επουρανιοις). You have everything you need to fight against your greatest foe, the devil!!

The book of Ephesians is all about how Christ has defeated every spiritual wicked enemy that formerly had power over the Ephesians. Paul wants them to know this power. Jesus is seated over every enemy and over every false representation (such as Artemis) that they formerly worshipped. He is the true Savior, not Artemis. He is the true Lord, not Artemis. We are seated with Him (2:6) in the heavenly places (ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις).

How do we apply this in our modern context?

What "rulers, authorities, powers, dominions" are you putting your hope in other than Jesus? What are the Artemis' of our day? Be careful lest that power become a stronghold of Satan in your life.

- **Maybe your Artemis is alcohol…**through alcohol I can numb my pain. Through alcohol I can develop, as they say, "liquid courage". Artemis
- **Maybe your Artemis is the government!** The President and this election is the power that we need to overcome the problems in our country! That's Artemis!
- **Maybe your Artemis is health or attraction.** I need to keep up impressions. I need to keep up appearances. I need to devote a ton of attention to my health in order to prolong my life. Artemis!
- **Maybe your Artemis is control. Here is a tell-tale sign that you worship control…I know because it's a stronghold I'm constantly having to fight against.** You get angry when things don't go your way. Like a child throwing a temper tantrum…something has been stripped from you…and you are angry. If you truly trusted God and His promises you wouldn't have to get so uptight about that thing…let it go! Show me an angry person and I will show you someone who at that moment is not trusting in God's control and promises.

I'm not saying that alcohol is evil – but for some of you it has become excessive and you rely upon it. I'm not saying we shouldn't pray for our president, support our government, and be sure to vote this election year, but if you're putting your hope in the power of the government – Artemis! It will let you down. We do not worship the Kingdom of the United States! We Worship the King of Kings and Lord of Lords! I'm not saying you shouldn't exercise, but let me tell you a little secret…you're going to die! 100% of all people die…it's a staggering statistic! Exercise and diet are essential for only one reason – for you and I to be good stewards of what God has given to us so that we can better, and more effectively serve the Lord while we're here. But you cannot prolong life…you can't walk around trying to impress everyone…your days are numbered and only God knows when those days are up. But you need not fear death for Jesus Christ has conquered death – His δυναμις power has conquered death when He raised from the dead!

How do you know if something has become a stronghold - your "ruler, authority, power, and dominion"? Here is my question for us this morning…

What name do you call upon?

When you're depressed, where do you go? When you're tired, where do you go? Is it to food? Is it to that glorious Artemis statue on the wall…known as the television? Where do you go for rest… can you

name it? Again, please hear me church…I'm not saying television is of the devil, I'm not saying we shouldn't enjoy food! ***But here's the question, do you worship these things or do you worship God <u>through</u> these things!***

Leisure, times of rest, foods that God created for us to enjoy…these things can be used to worship our Creator, or they can be used as idols that we worship. If it is a good gift, it is a gift from God that the devil wants to turn into an idol of worship.

Take food as an example: In 1 Timothy, Paul is writing to Timothy about the Greek ethics that had infiltrated the church. Some were saying marriage should be avoided and you should abstain from food. Enjoying sexual relations in marriage – BAD. Enjoying food - BAD. On the one side you had the stoics – "true virtue is to abstain". They were a massive bummer…you couldn't enjoy ANYTHING! The other side was the Epicureans, "food is for the stomach and the stomach is for food" (Paul quotes the Epicureans in 1 Cor. 6:13). The Epicureans taught… "don't hold back! Indulge!" Paul says abstinence is not the key, nor is sinful indulgence…rather, praise to God!:

> **For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving. (1 Tim. 4:4)**

We should ask questions: Is it good? Does the Bible expressly forbid it? Are you abusing it? Can you praise God when you enjoy it? If not…you should abstain. If so…be careful to not indulge so as to worship the gift instead of the Giver of the gift. This is how the devil seeks to build strongholds. If it has become a name that you call upon – it has become Artemis. The cure for strongholds is PRAISE! Enjoyment of God's gifts unto the glory of God. **Can you "enjoy-ify" God through it! Then do it!**

The devil means for you to worship the creation and to find your power in any source other than God. God means for you to glorify the creator…and you can do that by enjoying what God has given to enjoy in a healthy way.

In closing, how did Satan fall? Pride and Covetousness. He coveted the throne of God, the δυναμις power of God. He worshipped a throne instead of the one upon the throne. Pride is one of the greatest strongholds and the devil knows how to build it well.

Whatever your stronghold is this morning…there is good news, God knows about it, and He paid the penalty for that stronghold when He sent His Son Jesus to die on the cross. For some of you, pride is keeping you back from surrendering to Jesus…and yet if you were to be honest, you have strongholds in your life. Maybe you don't want to surrender to Jesus because you know He'll ask you to give up that stronghold. He has something so much better for you! God is NOT a killjoy! He wants to give to us unparalleled joy in Him! Will you give up that stronghold to Him, will you surrender to the Savior, and see that He is good and that He has real power?

pray