

UNTAPPED POWER, EPH.1:15-23

Awed by God #3

◆Intro: Dr. Bill Bright of Campus Crusade for Christ tells this story of a famous oil field called Yates Pool: During the depression this field was a sheep ranch owned by a man named Yates. Mr. Yates wasn't able to make enough on his ranching operation to pay the principal and interest on the mortgage, so he was in danger of losing his ranch. With little money for clothes or food, his family (like many others) had to live on government subsidy.

◆Day after day, as he grazed his sheep over those rolling West Texas hills, he was no doubt greatly troubled about how he would pay his bills. Then a seismographic crew from an oil company came into the area and told him there might be oil on his land. They asked permission to drill a wildcat well, and he signed a lease contract.

◆At 1,115 feet they struck a huge oil reserve. The first well came in at 80,000 barrels a day. Many subsequent wells were more than twice as large. In fact, 30 years after the discovery, a government test of one of the wells showed it still had the potential flow of 125,000 barrels of oil a day. And Mr. Yates owned it all. The day he purchased the land he had received the oil and mineral rights. Yet, he'd been living on relief. A multimillionaire living in poverty. The problem? He didn't know the oil was there even though he owned it. Many Christians live in spiritual poverty. They are entitled to the gifts of the Holy Spirit and his energizing power, but they are not aware of their birthright. This is one of the things Paul prays for in our passage.

◆**1. There is more for me to know about God than I do already.** Did you notice how Paul prays in verse 17? That we may “know him (God)

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better.” That the eyes of our hearts would be opened (v18). That we may be given the Spirit of wisdom and revelation (v17). Apparently there are things that even followers of God do not see. Were the believers in Ephesus not believers, or saved? Of course they were. Did the Holy Spirit not live in them? Of course he did. Other scriptures make it clear that no one can even come to the point of acknowledging Jesus as Lord unless the Holy Spirit is within you (1Cor.12:3)

◆ *“Therefore I tell you that no-one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, “Jesus be cursed,” and no-one can say, “Jesus is Lord,” except by the Holy Spirit.” 1 Corinthians 12:3, NIV.*

◆ So they had the Spirit. But there was still more. More next steps with God. What is your next step with God? Here’s the principle: becoming a follower of Jesus is not the last step in your spiritual journey. It is a first step. God wants you to know him more. It’s like this. You can *receive* the Spirit of Jesus as a believer, but you can also be *filled* with his Spirit. Put it another way, you can be a believer in Christ, and still not access the power or help available to you.

◆ I have a book about Billy Graham. Ever heard of him? If you live in North America it’s likely you have. It’s a fat book, about 2 inches thick! I have lots of information about Billy. But if you asked me, “Do you know Billy Graham?” I would have to say, “Well, no, not really.” I know about Mr. Graham. I know a lot of things he’s said. But we’re not personal friends. We don’t talk much... well, ever! Paul Baloche wrote a well known song call “Open the Eyes of My Heart”. Know it? We sing it all the time. I’ve met Paul Baloche. Even talked to him

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about how to play certain guitar chords. I went up to him after a talk once and he said, “Don’t I know you?” It was kinda exciting, to tell you the truth! It’s be great to be friends with him, I think. But I said, “No. We don’t know each other.” See, we don’t interact. Paul doesn’t call me much... well, ever! People, is it like that with you and God? You know of, but you don’t know much, you are not engaged?

◆ Paul is encouraging us to be persistent seekers of God.

◆ *“Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you,” declares the LORD, ”” Jeremiah 29:12-14, NIV.*

◆ Let me tell you a few stories just to show that there is more we can know, and experience of God. A pastor friend of mine was struggling over the purchase of some land for the church. Praying. Wondering. Two ladies walked in his office he didn’t know and said that God told them to come assure him about a land purchase. Another friend of mine was sorrowing and praying and she asked God to have her brother call her because she felt the need to talk to him. Before she finished praying the phone rang and guess who it was. Once I was on retreat with the council of a former church and we all went to be alone and ask God who to pray for. I asked and the name Ed, one of the council members came to mind. So I asked God what I should pray for Ed, and the words passed through my mind, “He doubts his significance.” So I prayed for him to know he was significant to God. Now everything that passes through your mind isn’t necessarily from God. The Bible says to test the spirits. So when we all reconvened and shared

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our stories I went last. I turned to Ed and said, “Well I prayed for you, Ed. I think God wants you to know you are significant to him.” Ed started to cry. After asking when I was praying for him, he shared that at that very time he had been asking God about his significance.

◆ I share these things to illustrate that God is active in his world.

There is more for us to find out and experience of him. He knows what’s happening in other people’s lives. He knows what the answer is to your troubles in your house. He knows what works and what you shouldn’t do. So let me ask you, how much are you seeking him in your day to day life? How much do you want to know? How often does his goodness overshadow the shadows of your world? How often are you seeking more from him? And— how much are we missing, huh? We walk past people, even in our own families and don’t even notice them, their emotions, their stories. There are joys, and needs all around us we totally walk on by! But God sees, and God speaks. There is more to know. That’s why in our text Paul prays that the believers in Ephesus may know God more. There is no greater thing in human life than to know the Being that made us.

◆ There is another thing he prays for...

◆ **2. In Christ I have hope; a glorious inheritance on the way!** v18.

Now why does Paul want us to be aware of what’s coming for us later?

Doesn’t being heavenly minded make you no earthly good? And yet,

Christianity is a decidedly future-looking faith. It is a faith that hopes in God

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for coming good. Speaking to the first century believers, the writer of Hebrews said...

◆ *“You sympathised with those in prison and joyfully accepted the confiscation of your property, because you knew that you yourselves had better and lasting possessions. So do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded. You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised. For in just a very little while, “He who is coming will come and will not delay. But my righteous one will live by faith. And if he shrinks back, I will not be pleased with him.” But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who believe and are saved. Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.” Hebrews 10:34-11:1, NIV.*

◆ Why were these people able to be caring and joyful even in sad circumstances? They knew something better was on the way. How about this text?

◆ *“[God’s grace] teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope--the glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ,” Titus 2:12, 13, NIV.*

◆ How did those people find the power to choose the right things? Have you ever felt the inability to deny yourself? The inability to stop yourself from doing something you know is wrong or will turn out badly later? How are some folks able to refuse tempting, but sinful and destructive things?

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They have their eyes set on a blessed hope, a *future* blessing. Check this out...

◆“Now if we are children, then we are heirs--heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory. I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.” Romans 8:17, 18, NIV. or...

◆“Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal. Now we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands.” 2 Corinthians 4:16-5:1, NIV.

◆When we walk with God, something good is always coming. We have hope in Christ. We have the best possible future! We have the promise of life, no more death, reunion with believers we loved and lost. We have the promise of peace, shalom, grace forevermore. No pollution. No temptation. No offensive words. Plenty of joyfulness. Plenty to celebrate. Sparkling lakes of the new creation. Never a migraine a-gain. No need for locks. No need for guns except for the fun of blasting clay out of the sky maybe. No need for insurance. We will walk and talk with God!

◆In this truth of our coming inheritance, God is like a good father saying, “I know it hurts, my son. I know you’re tired. But I promise, it will soon get better. You’ll see. Come on, we’re almost there. It will be worth it.” You see, the reason you and I can go on, in a tragic

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world, of lying politicians, and foolish foreign relations, and personal perplexities -is that redemption is always coming for us who believe. So we can go to work on this earth for everything we give the shape of heaven will carry on into eternity! *You need to know your glorious inheritance.*

◆The third thing Paul prays for the Ephesians and us to know is...

◆**3. In Christ I have power for things I cannot affect myself.**

◆Verse 19 is Paul's attempt to pile on power words. Let me give you an awkward, yet exact translation. "That dynamite is like the energy-surge of the might, of his dominion." Verse 20 tells us he's talking about resurrection power. Do you know anyone at all who can made dead matter into a living creature? No you don't. Sure it happens in our TV shows and comic books, but we all know it's not true. Nobody comes back from the dead... except Christ. Not Jason. Not the Arrows sister. Not Dr. Who. Not Buffy the Vampire Slayer... Only Christ.

◆What is resurrection power? All through Paul's letters he talks about wanting to know that power....

◆"I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead."

Philippians 3:10, 11, NIV.

◆**A.** There are different definitions of power we might consider. On the one hand Christian possess a power greater than demonic power. Paul references this in v21.

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- ◆“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.” Ephesians 1:21, NIV.
- ◆He makes the same kind of reference in chapter 6 where he says
 - ◆“For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.” Ephesians 6:12, NIV.
- ◆So then, at least part of the power we have in Christ is over devils, and evils. A Wycliff Bible translator tells of trying to prove to the natives of a jungle village that demons were not real. He decided to do what was taboo in their culture: to call out loud the names of dead villagers. The towns people pleaded with him to stop. Later that night two red eyes appeared hovering over his bed and a crushing weight began to suffocate him. He writes, “I knew there was only one hope, that I had to say the name of Jesus, but I couldn’t speak at all. Finally I managed a muffled slur that didn’t sound anything like “Jesus” but whatever it was lifted, and the eyes floated across the room and vanished through the wall. I ran to the window and watched them disappear into the jungle.” The next day that translator apologized to the people and agreed that demons were real. But then he told them of a power that was greater! I think Paul is referring to this kind of power here.
 - ◆You, believer, have power to command the spirits at your disposal. The name of Jesus! He is yours and you are his. You are not

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helpless victims! Use the name! Appeal to the name. Pray in his name!

◆**B.** But in addition there is another. Christians possess by the Spirit a power to endure great hardship and hurt without being destroyed. Listen to some of the things that happened to Paul.

◆“Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my own countrymen, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false brothers. I have laboured and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked.” 2 Corinthians 11:24-27, NIV.

◆Sheesh! If a friend is rude to us over coffee we can go home tired! How did Paul live through this? I suggest to you that it is God’s power he accessed. And you know other Christians who have borne equally difficult lives and you wonder, “How could they do it?” How could she live in the jungle with aborigines for 30 years joyfully, ...with no curling iron?! How could he be slighted everyday at the machine shop and maintain a smile, a loving heart, a strong work ethic, an honest friendliness to his fellow employees and a prayer for their salvation? The power of the holy spirit in the life of a Christ-follower enables more than we can manufacture on our own. Don’t you doubt that He is in you either! I’ve seen it in many of you,

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even if you don't recognize it in yourself! You take more than many, and still you love, still you give. And do you want that power? Do you need it in your marriage? Your job place? In your school?

◆ **Conclusion:** Pray friends. Pray that the eyes of our hearts be opened, that we may know...

◆ God better

◆ the hope of our glorious inheritance

◆ his incomparably great power for us who believe

◆ During Superbowl XXXVII, FedEx ran a commercial that spoofed the movie Castaway, in which Tom Hanks played a FedEx worker whose company plane went down, stranding him on a desert island for years. Looking like the bedraggled Hanks in the movie, the FedEx employee in the commercial goes up to the door of a suburban home, package in hand.

◆ When the lady comes to the door, he explains that he survived five years on a deserted island, and during that whole time he kept this package in order to deliver it to her. She gives a simple, "Thank you."

◆ But he is curious about what is in the package that he has been protecting for years. He says, "If I may ask, what was in that package after all?" She opens it and shows him the contents, saying, "Oh, nothing really. Just a satellite telephone, a global positioning device, a compass, a water purifier, and some seeds."

◆ Like the contents in this package, the resources for growth and strength are available for every Christian who will take advantage of them.