
The Summation of All Things in Christ

Studies in Ephesians with a Local Church Emphasis

LESSON XIII : THANKSGIVING, INTERCESSION AND CONFSSIONAL MATERIAL IN PRAISE TO GOD — 1:15-23

Paul gives thanks for the readers

¹⁵ Therefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, ¹⁶ do not cease to give thanks for you,

intercessory prayer-report

making mention of you in my prayers: ¹⁷ that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, ¹⁸ the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know

what is the hope of His calling,

what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints,

¹⁹ and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe,

confessional material in praise of God's power in the resurrection and exaltation of Christ, leading into the next section

according to the working of His mighty power ²⁰ which He worked in Christ

when He raised Him from the dead

and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places,

²¹ far above

all principality

and power

and might

and dominion,

and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come.

²² And He put all things under His feet,

and gave Him to be head over all things to the [congregation],

²³ which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all. (NKJV)

Thanksgiving with Prayer for the Believers' Knowledge of God and Their Awareness of the Significance of the Assembly (1:15-23)

Therefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own

For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. 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. 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, and his incomparably great power for us who believe. 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

Because of this I also, having heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and the love to all the saints, do not cease giving thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of the glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the recognition of him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened, for your knowing what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what the exceeding greatness of His power to us who are believing, according to the working of the power of His might, which He wrought in the Christ, having raised him out of the dead, and did set [him] at His right hand in the

right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all. (KJV)

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. And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way. (NIV)

heavenly [places], far above all principality, and authority, and might, and lordship, and every name named, not only in this age, but also in the coming one; and all things He did put under his feet, and did give him — head over all things to the assembly, which is his body, the fulness of Him who is filling the all in all, (Young's Literal Translation)

v. 19 — FOUR DIFFERENT CONNOTATIONS OF “POWER” — *“and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power”* (καὶ τί τὸ ὑπερβάλλον μέγεθος τῆς δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ εἰς ἡμᾶς τοὺς πιστεύοντας κατὰ τὴν ἐνέργειαν τοῦ κράτους τῆς ἰσχύος αὐτοῦ, kai ti to hyperballon megethos tēs dunameōs autou esihēmas tous pisteuontas kata tēn energeian tou kratous tēs ischuos auto) Paul uses four different words in this verse to describe the power of God. “[T]hese words overlap and the point of using all of these words is not so much to emphasize their distinctiveness but to enforce the idea of God’s abundant power available to all believers.” [Hoehner, 271] “[W]hen such synonyms are piled up, as happens in this part of the sentence, it is a question whether we should distinguish them so sharply. F. W. Grosheide is probably correct when he says, ‘It is difficult to indicate an accurate distinction between the various words used for power. It is permissible to conclude that the apostle uses more than one term to indicate the fulness and the certainty of this power.’” [Hendriksen, 100] To illustrate how difficult it is to translate these different terms with so similar and overlapping meanings, check out the variety within some of the translations:

“And what is the exceeding greatness of his **power** to us-ward who believe, according to the **working** of his **mighty power**” (1599 Geneva Bible, KJV, NKJV)

“and what is the immeasurable greatness of his **power** in us who believe, according to the **working** of his **great might**” (RSV, ESV)

“and what the exceeding greatness of his **power** to us-ward who believe, according to that **working** of the **strength** of his **might**” (ASV, NASV)

“and what the exceeding greatness of His **power** to us who are believing, according to the **working** of the **power** of His **might**,” (YLT)

“and his incomparably great **power** for us who believe. That power is like the **working** of his **mighty strength**,” (NIV)

“And what is the superabounding greatness of His **inherent power** to us who are believing ones as measured by the **operative energy** of the **manifested strength** of His **might**.” (Wuest)

Here is a break-down of each of the different terms: “and what is the exceeding greatness of His **power** [1, τῆς δυνάμεως, tēs dunameōs] toward us who believe, according to the **working** [2, τὴν ἐνέργειαν, tēn energeian] of His **mighty** [3, τοῦ κράτους, tou kratous] **power** [4, τῆς ἰσχύος, tēs ischuos]” (NKJV)

● **[1] power = δυνάμεως [dunameōs]** “Although dynamite is derived from this word, there is no suggestion here or anywhere in the Bible that God’s power is instantaneous or explosive. Furthermore, dynamite was not invented until at least a millennium after NT times. Rather, *it has the idea of ‘power, ability, capability of acting.’ ... By way of contrast, the verb form of this word used with a negative particle is seen in Rom 8:7-8 where Paul states that the natural person does not have the power, ability, or capability to please God. Hence, this power or ability is that which is capable for the task and is determined by what it is modified. Here it is modified by the possessive personal pronoun ‘his,’ and thus it is talking about God’s power, the ability of God himself. It is no wonder that Paul calls it the surpassing greatness of his power.*” [Hoehner, 268f] Wuest: dunamis = *natural ability, general and inherent*. It occurs 119x in the NT, 49x by Paul and 5x in the book of Ephesians itself.

● **[2] working = ἐνέργειαν [energeian]** We’ve already seen this word in v. 11. *It is from which we get our English word “energy.” It is “actual power” in contrast with “potential power.”* It is used 8x in the NT and only by Paul, 3x in Ephesians. Wuest: energia = *power in exercise, operative power*. *“It always refers to supernatural power: once of satanic power (2 Thess 2:9), while the others allude to God’s power directly (Eph 1:19; 3:7; Phil 3:21; Col 1:29; 2:12; 2 Thess 2:11) or indirectly (Eph 4:16). In conclusion, [energeia] is supernatural power that is in actual operation. It is the active exercise of supernatural power.”* [Hoehner, 270]

● **[3] mighty = κράτους [kratous]** means *“strength, might,” like physical strength or “mastery, victory” as in a war.* Wuest: kratos = *manifested strength*. It is used in the NT 12x, 4x by Paul and twice in Ephesians. *This too always refers to supernatural power: once to Satan (Heb 2:14) and the other 11x to God. This word is used in doxologies to extol the power or dominion of God (1 Pet 5:11; Jude 25; Rev 5:13) and of Christ (1 Tim 6:16; 1 Pet 4:11; Rev 1:6; 5:13).*

In the verb form this word means primarily “to grasp, seize, or capture.” “It is from [kratos] from which we get theocracy, the rule of God; autocracy, absolute rule; democracy, the rule of the people; and plutocracy, the rule of the wealthy. Therefore, [kratos] has the meaning of ‘strength, might, dominion, master.’” [Hoehner, 270]

• [4] **power** = ἰσχύος [ischuos] denotes “strength, power, might, ability” that is possessed like the strength of human beings. Wuest: ischuos = strength, power as an endowment. It is used in the NT 10x, 3x by Paul, twice being in Ephesians (1:19; 6:10). *“It generally denotes inherent strength.... It has reference to the strength of humans (Mark 12:30 = Luke 10:27; Mark 12:33), and of angels (2 Pet 2:11); the power of strength of God (Eph 1:19; 6:10; 2 Thess 1:9; 1 Pet 4:11); and it is used in doxologies to praise the might of Christ (Rev 5:12) and God (7:12). It continues to have the idea of a power or strength that can be possessed.” [Hoehner, 271]*

“How do these words for power relate to each other? All four terms are closely related and overlap with one another. First, [ischus] speaks of inherent strength or of power possessed. Second, [kratos] is close to [ischus] but denotes even more emphatically the presence and significance of the strength or force of power, or the ability to overcome resistance, or more at the visible aspect of strength, perhaps its supremacy. Third, [energeia] stresses the activity of power, namely, it is power in action. Fourth, [dunamis], found earlier in this verse, denotes capacity in view of its ability or potential power. *By way of illustration, a bulldozer has the ability, capacity, and potential of routing out trees (dunamis). By looking at it, one senses its inherent strength (ischus) but when its engine roars and it begins to move, its power of mastery becomes obvious (kratos). However, when it comes to a tree and knocks it over one sees the activity of its power (energeia).... Paul states that the end of knowing God intimately is that we might know what is the surpassing greatness of his ability or potential power which is according to the mighty activity of power derived from his inherent strength. This power is directed to all who believe. It is this kind of power that is needed to survive the satanic hostile powers and worldly system that surrounds us....* Outside of the NT, with the exception of [energeia], a combination of these terms was used in the magical papyri of the third and fourth centuries AD. However, in them the petitioner implores the angelic powers to use magical incantations in order to gain ascendancy over people. This is in direct contrast to the scriptural principal of knowing God and his power.” [Hoehner, 271f]

toward us who believe — εἰς ἡμᾶς τοὺς πιστεύοντας [eis hēmas tous pisteuontas] **toward us** = a surprising change from the second person (“you”) in the first two parallel clauses to the first person (“us”). Paul here sees himself as much in need of help as other believers. **us who believe** = This is not to be confused with “we have power with God only when we believe;” rather, “who believes” further defines “us” — “God’s power is directed towards us, those who are believers.” The preposition used here indicates direction and relates back to the power of God: *“The goal of knowing God intimately is that we might know his great power that is directed towards ‘us.’”* This lends further credence to one’s acceptance of “right doctrine leads to right living.” Granted, “right doctrine” may often lead to “dead orthodoxy” but I suggest that error is an error of the heart and if fully evaluated, the “right doctrine” was not entirely correct in the first place. “Right doctrine” involves the practical teaching and application of Christianity as well as doctrinal facts; leave out the practicality and “right doctrine” becomes “wrong doctrine.” Here Paul teaches that we as believers receive the power to live obediently in proportion (in direct proportion?) to our intimacy of our knowledge of God. *“Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.... Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.” (John 17:3,17)* *This is in contrast with the popular trend in our culture where “loving God” is directly proportional to the number of goosebumps one gets during a “praise concert.” Bible study is mocked and doctrine is cursed. One’s love of God is equated with how that one may feel emotionally at the time. This teaching has led to a great weakening in our modern churches. The proper balance between our intellect and our emotions must be obtained and maintained.*

according to the mighty working of his power — κατὰ τὴν ἐνέργειαν τοῦ κράτους τῆς ἰσχύος αὐτοῦ. [kata tēn energeian tou kratous tēs ischuos auto] This does not refer back to “toward us who believe” but rather to “the surpassing greatness of his power.” Literally, “according to the working of might of power of his.” Hoehner states this could be understood either as “the mighty working of his strength” (AV) or “the working of his mighty strength” (RSV, JB, NIV, NJB, NRSV). *“Having mentioned the surpassing greatness of God’s power, Paul is now going to show that it is literally ‘according to the power of the power of his power.’ Paul lists three words for power used to describe the standard of the greatness of God’s power.” [Hoehner, 269]*

“AS A MEASURE, IN PROPORTION” OF HIS POWER — “The κατὰ [kata, ‘according to’] is best taken here in its proper sense of *measure, standard or proportion*. What the clause sets before us, therefore, is that *the measure of that surpassing power of God which is the guarantee of our hope, is the operation of the exertion of the might that dwells in God as seen in the historical case instanced in the following sentence, viz., the resurrection and exaltation of Christ.*” [S. D. F. Salmond, *Expositor’s Greek Testament: Epistle to the Ephesians*, 277]

INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL POWER — “While it is true that God’s power operates within believers, it also operates on them as it were from outside. Its external nature is confirmed here by the reference in v. 20 to God raising Christ.” [Best, 169]

POWER IN LOVE AND GRACE — “While many religions stress the power of the deity, what is more important is the nature of that power and the way it is exercised. For AE the power of God is closely related to his grace and love (love was related to his electing power in 1.4f), and in our present passage God’s power is exercised in the raising and exalting of Christ and in the raising, exalting and delivering from sin of believers (2.1-10)” [Best, 170]

POWER LIMITED BY THE WILL OF GOD — “It needs also to be said that the power of God is not seen in ‘miracles’: despite God’s power, Paul remains a prisoner.” [Best, 170]

WAS 1:20-23 ORIGINALLY PART OF AN ANCIENT CREED OR HYMN? — Some hold that vv. 20-23 incorporates an ancient hymn but this is not probable. “Certainly its subject matter contains elements found in what are generally acknowledged as Christological hymns elsewhere in the NT: Christ’s resurrection from the dead, his exaltation, his session at God’s right hand, and his supremacy over the powers (cf. Phil 2:6-11; Col 1:15-20; 1 Tim 3:16)... [But some scholars argue] that if a hymn does lie behind vv. 20-23, it is more likely to have begun with statements about Christ’s incarnation and his death in common with other NT Christological hymns than with a reference to the resurrection, so that in fact any reconstruction will be of a fragment of a hymn rather than a complete hymn. In the nature of the case this makes any convincing demonstration of the original much more difficult.” [Lincoln, 51] “1:20-3 have sometimes been regarded as a hymn or as based on one. Certainly the verses contain a number of phrases drawn from the catechetical and / or liturgical traditions which with some careful editing could be made to resemble a hymn or credal statement. That however is very far from saying they are a hymn or formal statement of belief or even are adapted from either. Themes, like the death of Christ and its significance, which we might have expected in a hymn of formal statement, are missing.” [Best, 157] **Whether Paul was quoting from an ancient hymn or not, I think the important thing to note from this is that what was written is still the inspired Word of God. Biblical authors quoting from existing material does not alter the doctrine of inspiration.**

v. 20 — which power he exercised in Christ — ἦν ἐνέργησεν ἐν τῷ Χριστῷ [hēn enērgēsēn en tō Christō] This refers back to v19, the “working” [energeian] of his power. **It always speaks of power that is active, hence in this context it has the sense of “which power he exercised, exerted.”** **Which he wrought** — The verb is aorist; the time-reference is to the actual past crisis of the Lord’s exaltation. [Moule, 64] In Christ = the sphere or place where God worked his power, therefore, God worked his power “in the case of Christ, in the person of Christ.”

by raising him from the dead — ἐγείρας αὐτὸν ἐκ νεκρῶν [egeiras auton ek nekron] **the word “dead” is plural, literally “out from among the dead ones.”** “Christ was raised out of all those who had died and who remain buried in the earth. Other places in Paul’s writings which liken the resurrection of Christ with the power of God are 1 Cor 6:14, Rom 1:4 and Phil 3:10. This resurrection power is truly an expression of active power, for although Lazarus was raised from the dead, he died again and returned to the grave. On the other hand, God did more than raise Christ from the dead. This is seen in the next [phrase].” [Hoehner, 274]

IT COULD REFER TO ‘WHEN’ OR ‘HOW’ — This could have the sense of either expressing a time element, “which God exercised in Christ when he raised him from the dead” or it could express means, showing how he exercised the power “by raising him from the dead.” Hoehner prefers the latter because the time element is included because Christ’s resurrection is unique. **“If the death of Christ is the supreme demonstration of the love of God, as Paul wholeheartedly believed (Rom. 5:8), the resurrection of Christ is the supreme demonstration of his power. ‘Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father’ (Rom. 6:4) — that is to say, by ‘the power of God gloriously exercised.’ And glorious power, in its ‘surpassing greatness,’ is at work in the people of Christ: it is ‘the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead’ that dwells in them (Rom. 8:11), energizing the new life within their mortal bodies and so making the hope of resurrection real for them.”** [Bruce, 271]

CHRIST’S RESURRECTION POWER AVAILABLE TO BELIEVERS — **“With his insistence on believers’ union by faith with the living Christ, Paul applied the substance of this confession and proclamation to the practical business of Christian faith and life.** Not only was the resurrection of Christ the first fruits of his people’s future resurrection (1 Cor. 15:20, 23); it provided the reason for their here and now walking ‘in newness of life’ (Rom. 6:4). The indwelling Spirit, who supplied the hope of their future resurrection (Rom. 8:11), also supplied the power to live day by day as those who had died with Christ and been raised to new life with him (Rom. 6:6-11; 8:12-14). We have seen the moral driven home in Colossians: ‘if you died with Christ ...’ (2:20); ‘if you were raised with Christ ...’ (3:1). It is driven home again, and further elaborated, in Eph. 1:20-2:10. **The power, then, with which God works in the lives of believers is the power by which he raised Christ from death to share his throne.”** [Bruce, 272f]

and by seating him at his right hand — καὶ καθίσας ἐν δεξιᾷ αὐτοῦ [kai kathisas en dexia autou] **“In the ancient world to be seated at the right hand was to be given the position of honour and the one who occupied it was the one closest in power to the one beside whom he sat, here God.”** [Best, 171] “The NT writers often used Ps 110:1 — *‘The Lord said to my Lord: ‘Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool’* — to demonstrate that when Jesus was resurrected he also became the exalted Lord. **To sit at the right hand of God is a ‘symbol of divine power.’ Hence, God not only exercised power in Christ in the resurrection but also gave him the place of honor (Matt 26:64; Heb 1:3-4, 13; 8:1; 10:12-13; 12:2) with which comes authority (Matt 28:18). In the future, humans and angels will stand before God and worship him, but Christ is not thus portrayed. Rather, he is presently seated at God’s right hand.”** [Hoehner, 275] D. M. Hay, *Glory at the Right Hand: Psalm 110 in Early Christianity*, claims **there are some thirty-three quotations or allusions to Ps 110 scattered throughout the NT.** [O’Brien, 140] “The ascension (and / or the heavenly session) is sometimes simply stated as a fact; sometimes, as here, attention is drawn to the activity of the Exalted One as ruling (cf. 1 Pet 3:22) or interceding (Rom 8.34); it is only in Acts 1.9-11 that the ascension is described physically. At times Christ is said to sit down at God’s right hand (Heb 1.3; 10.12) and at other times God is said to seat him (Acts 2.33-5; 5.31); the latter accords better with Ps 110.1 and fits the flow of the present passage. While Psalm 110 was probably not taken as messianic prior to Christianity, believers rapidly gave it this sense. **It is the Psalm most frequently quoted or alluded to in the NT, especially in relation to the heavenly session, and was early associated with Ps 8.** Whether Ps 110 originally created, shaped or was simply used to express believe in the heavenly session, by AE’s time it was accepted as

prophesying it and used to express it.” [Best, 171f] “The glorious metaphor betokens a share in the throne (Rev 3:21), not merely session near it.” [Moule, 65]

CHRIST SITS ON THE ONE THRONE OF THE UNIVERSE — Years ago a well-meaning Pastor friend made the following comment: “If I do not see three thrones when I get to heaven, I will be disappointed.” His meaning was that when he got to heaven he expected to see one throne for each God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. My response to that would be “no, and no.” No, when he gets to heaven, I do not believe he will see anything other than a single throne with the God-Man, Christ Jesus, sitting on that throne. And the second: no, he will not be disappointed! He will be overwhelmed with the majesty, splendor and glory of the One sitting on that throne! God is an omnipresent Spirit with His essence pervading the entire universe (He is not “at one” with the universe, that is the teaching of pantheism; rather He created the universe, is separate from His creation and yet is present everywhere within His created universe). Most theologians I have studied understand the trinity as God the Father being over-all while God the Son is God’s “outward expression”, the One who reveals God. God the Holy Spirit is the “inward expression”, the One bringing others to Himself. ***But forever and forever, God has chosen to manifest Himself in the Person of His Son, the God-Man, the One forever united with humanity in His incarnation. When we get to heaven we will see God as manifested in the person of the Son, and it will be glorious!*** This further illustrates the fact that “Christ sitting at the right-hand of God” is a metaphor to declare the sovereignty of His exalted position, not that He is literally on a second-throne next to God the Father.

in the heavenly realms — ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις [en tois epouraniois] We have already seen this phrase. It is unique to Ephesians and used 5x (1:3, 20; 2:6; 3:10; 6:12) to denote the spiritual realm. “[O]ne must not equate the functions of ‘at the right hand’ and ‘in the heavenlies’ because the former is a symbol of sovereignty. This is in contrast to the position of believers (2:6) and satanic forces (6:12) who are in the heavenlies, but neither are at the right hand of God. This is reserved only for Christ. It displays sovereignty at the present time and indicates his authority over the world and the church. This will be seen further in verse 22. The main point of the passage, then, is that God exercised his power in raising Christ and then seated him at his right hand. This is an exalted position with all authority and this same power is available to believers to appropriate in their lives.” [Hoehner, 275f]

v. 21 — **above every ruler and authority and power and dominion** — ὑπεράνω πάσης ἀρχῆς καὶ ἐξουσίας καὶ δυνάμεως καὶ κυριότητος [huperanō pasēs archēs kai exousias kai dunameōs kai kuriotētos] **Every, all** = this could be translated “all” or “every,” the sense being that **Christ’s position in the heavenlies is above “every kind of” power that exists.** Hoehner and Salmond argues for the latter but there is very little difference in meaning between the two. **Above, far above** = this word is a combination of two words, huper + anō. Since anō by itself means “above”, some think this is intensive and denotes “far above.” Hoehner argues against this however, noting that this same word is used in other places where it cannot denote “far above”, e.g., the people stood “above” the Tower of Furnaces at the dedication of Jerusalem (Neh 12:38); the gourd that made shadow “over” Jonah’s head which could not have been too far above or it would not have shaded Jonah (Jonah 4:6); and it speaks of the cherubim “over” the mercy seat which could not be translated “far above” (Heb 9:5). “It is true that Christ is far above all other authorities, but this is not defined by [huperanō] but by the fact that he is at the right hand of God. Therefore, it is best not to translate it ‘far above’ (AV, RV, ASV, RSV, NASB, NEB, JB, NIV, NJB, NRSV) but ‘above’ (TEV).” [Hoehner, 276] All those facts may be so but I like H. C. G. Moule’s summation better: ***“The same word as in 4:10, and in Heb 9:5 (A.V., ‘over’). The Greek does not necessarily denote distance; see Heb 9:5. But the compound form admits the idea, and in St Paul’s style, especially in a passage like this, we are right to see it.”*** [Moule, 65]

Paul mentions four terms for “powers” over which Christ rules:

- **ruler** = ἀρχῆς [archēs] **always signifies primacy**, either in relation to time (it is used most frequently in this sense, referring to “beginning,” e.g., John 1:1; 6:64) or rank (“power, dominion, office,” e.g., Col 2:10). Here the context is definitely that of rank. **The word denotes one who is in first place or power.** It is used 55x in the NT, 11x by Paul and 3x in Ephesians (1:21; 3:10; 6:12). It can speak of a spiritual or a secular leader (Luke 12:11; 20:20; Titus 3:1) or angelic leadership (Eph 3:10; 6:12; Col 1:16). Although it could refer to a human ruler, Paul is probably using it of an angelic ruler in this verse.
- **authority** = ἐξουσίας [exousias] is derived from a word meaning “that which is permitted,” in the sense of “the freedom to act.” This word therefore means **“the right to act, freedom of choice, authority.”** It is used 102x in the NT, 27x by Paul and 4x in Ephesians (1:21; 2:2; 3:10; 6:12). As a plural it could refer to either spiritual or secular leaders. Here in the singular it often has reference to “government” and could be translated “domain, realm, kingdom.” Again, **although this could be human authority, it probably refers to angelic authority in this verse.** Alford says both heavenly and earthly authorities are meant to be included, therefore fallen angels are included.
- **power** = δυνάμεως [dunameōs] **this power or ability is that which is capable for the task** and is determined by what it is modified. This word was discussed in v. 19; see the above notes. As with the other words, **although it could refer to human power, it probably has the sense of angelic power.**
- **dominion** = κυριότητος [kuriotētos] is rarely found outside of the NT, and is only used 4x in the NT. One can see it is related to the word “lord” (κύριος, kurios) and basically means **“the power or position as lord.”** It is used of God’s authority which is despised by the false teachers (2 Pet 2:10; Jude 8). **Whether in reference to human or angelic dominions, it is something created by God along with thrones, principalities, and authorities (Col 1:16). Here it has**

the sense of “dominion, lordship.”

Forgive the extended quote but Harold Hoehner writes a good summation: “Having looked at the terms briefly, we will now compare them to other passages listing authorities and rulers. Outside of 1 Pet 3:22, only Paul gives a list of rulers (always in the same order with the exception of Col 1:16). Three times Paul lists three authorities, and twice they are listed in the following order: [‘ruler, authority, and power;’ archē, exousia, and dunamis] (Eph 1:21; 1 Cor 15:24) and once [‘dominion, ruler, authority;’ kuriotēs, archē, and exousia] (Col 1:16). Ten times two powers are listed in the following order: [‘ruler and authority;’ archē and exousia] (Luke 12:11; 20:20; 1 Cor 15:24; Eph 1:20; 3:10; 6:12; Col 1:16; 2:10, 15; Titus 3:1), once [‘ruler and power;’ archē and dunamis] (Rom 8:38), and once [‘authority and power;’ exousia and dunamis] (1 Pet 3:22). There are some observations to be made regarding the passages cited above.

- First, *certain terms are used much more frequently than others*: [‘ruler and authority;’ archē and exousias] are mentioned eight times each, [‘power;’ dunamis] four times, and [‘dominion;’ kuriotēs] twice.
- Second, *the names themselves used of human government indicate their political function in the cosmic order* (cf. 2:2; 3:10; 6:12).
- Third, *there is a general order of titles but this order is violated at times and thus it is difficult if not impossible to denote hierarchy*.
- Fourth, *there is a definite influence from Jewish sources, although one should not exclude the pagan environment*.
- Fifth, *Christ is over all these powers*.
- Sixth, *Christ’s supremacy, in some cases, is already accomplished* (Eph 1:21; 3:10; Col 2:10, 15; 1 Pet 3:22) *while in others it is yet to be demonstrated* (1 Cor 15:14).
- Seventh, *some of these refer to heavenly powers* (Eph 3:10; 6:12) *and others to earthly rulers* (Titus 3:1).
- Eighth, *the terms do not denote impersonal entities but personal beings*.

In conclusion, the four terms in the present passage are abstract and difficult to pin down. *There is debate as to whether these terms refer to human or angelic authorities or whether they are good or evil powers*. Carr thinks the terms have reference to angels and archangels of God and are not demonic or evil. However, *in the context of the book it seems that these rulers are angelic and also evil in character*. In the present context, Christ is seated at the right hand of the Father and this may be an allusion to Ps 110 where God will make the enemies of Christ his footstool. Furthermore, other references to ‘powers’ in this letter clearly affirm that they are evil (6:11-12, 16; 4:8, 27). In 6:12 Paul specifically states that ‘our struggles is not against flesh and blood but against the rulers, against authorities, against the mighty world of this darkness, against the spiritual wickedness in the heavenlies.’” [Hoehner, 278ff]

CHRIST IS OVER ALL — In Sunday School class Pastor reminded us, and rightly so, of the futility of trying to determine whether Paul was referring to angelic or human institutions, and if angelic, whether it referred to good or evil powers. While those discussions may be interesting, it is important not to miss Paul’s main point: *Jesus Christ is sovereign and has in subjection all powers, whether they be human institutions, the rank and levels of holy angels wholeheartedly worshiping Him, or the most evil, demonic powers including the Satan himself! Paul is saying Christ is on the highest throne possible and there is no person nor power in the universe outside of the rule of Jesus Christ. Amen and amen!*

BELIEVERS ARE IN A SPIRITUAL BATTLE WITH ANGELIC BEINGS — “[T]hese powers most likely are angelic and evil and wish to rob us of our spiritual benefits. The point is clear that Christ is over these authorities and they will not have the final victory. The struggle between God and these evil powers is real and in the present day the battle rages between these angelic powers and believers, individually and corporately. The central point of this passage is that believers have the power that raised and seated Christ far above every power. We are to appropriate that power in light of the spiritual warfare that is portrayed in chapter 6.” [Hoehner, 280] “We gather from the Epistle to the Colossians that the Churches of Asia Proper were at this time in danger from a quasi-Jewish doctrine of Angel-worship, akin to the heresies afterwards known as Gnosticism. Such a fact gives special point to the phrases here.” [Moule, 66] “The leading idea of the section and the apparent purport of similar statements (Eph 3:10; Col 1:16; Rom 8:38; 1 Pet 3:22) point to the angelic world as meant.” [S. D. F. Salmond, 278] “It should be noted that the matter of the cosmic war between God and His angelic hosts and Satan and his demons is a matter of great importance in Scripture. Redemption is a demonstration of God’s power before the angels (3:10). Our conflict is with these fallen angels, who endeavor to halt our efforts for God (6:12; cf. 1 Pet 3:18-22, which shows Christ’s triumph over those fallen angels, accomplished in His death). Satan and his hosts have endeavored to thwart the plan of God from the beginning and are the constant enemy of the work of the kingdom, but they are destined to be overthrown and eternally banished (Rev 20:10-15).” [MacArthur, 49]

and every name that is named — καὶ παντὸς ὀνόματος ὀνομαζομένου [kai pantos onomatos onomazomenou] “This rhetorical flourish at the end of v 21 underlies the universality of Christ’s rule over any imaginable cosmic forces and brings home to believers that they have no possible justification for considering themselves under the control of such powers. The phrase ‘every name that is named’ indicates that the preceding list of names was not meant to be exhaustive and suggests that the powers of which the writer speaks include beings whom many in Asia Minor might regard as deities. ‘To call on the name’ of a deity is a familiar OT expression for worship of that deity, e.g., 1 Kgs 18:24. Arnold has drawn attention to the fact that the

calling of the names of deities and supernatural powers was fundamental to the practice of magic, and therefore the term ὄνομα [onoma = name] itself is pervasive in the magical papyri. ***It is significant for this writer's view of Christ's supremacy over the names that in Phil 2:9-11 Paul could say that through his exaltation Christ had been given a name above every name.*** [Lincoln, 65] Meyer: ***"Let any name be uttered, whatever it is, Christ is above it; it is more exalted than that which the name uttered affirms."*** — cp Phil 2:9. "One interpretation proposes that the name refers to spiritual beings with divine powers which one invokes and worships. The problem with that view is that this changes the subject of the verb from God to humans. This would indicate that humans choose the name or spiritual being they worship, whereas the context signifies God as the subject. He is the one who has designated the names and has exalted Christ above every name. A better interpretation is that God is the namer, as seen in the OT where he gave a new name to Abram (Gen 17:5) and to Jacob (Gen 32:28), and even determined the number of stars and gave all of them their names (Ps 147:4). Thus in the present context after naming specific authorities (v. 21a) over which Christ has authority, Paul indicates that every name that God cites is under Christ's authority (v. 21b). ***It is a comprehensive statement specifying that regardless of designation or title a ruling power may have whether in heaven or on earth, it is inferior to Christ who is at the right hand of God. This corresponds to Phil 2:9 where God has highly exalted Christ and bestowed on him the name which is above every name.*** [Hoehner, 280f] "Four 'titles' are applied here to the powers but there is no need in view of the following phrases to see in that an attempt at their exhaustive enumeration (four winds, four points of the compass, etc.; compare the use of 'four' in Revelation). Equally we should not suppose that they are set in either a descending or ascending order of importance. In 1 Cor 15:24ff the subjection of powers is in process and not yet complete but has a purpose, that God may be all in all; in vv. 21f the subjection is already complete and is an end in itself. ***Since AE is not sure he has named all the powers or classes of powers he adds a clause to ensure none has been excluded. Had he not done so, some of his readers who knew them by other names might have worried if the powers they knew had in fact been overcome; we may compare the way in which in some magical spells a whole series of gods or demons is invoked by name in case the omission of one name should cause the spell to fail. The clause is not a scornful rejection of the powers as if they had no real existence nor does it indicate their worth or value. In the ancient world a name was more than a verbal symbol; it was believed to have a genuine relation to the reality to which it was attached; to know the name of a demon gave power over it (Gen 2.19f; Mk 5.9). In the Philippian hymn God gives Christ a new name, Lord, indicating a new position of superiority. By listing names and implying there are other names for the powers, AE is not however claiming that knowledge of names gives Christians superiority to the powers but saving his readers from possible doubts. It is Christ alone who has superiority.... Believers need not fear the powers since they are already delivered, at least potentially, from them, though they still need to wage war against them (6.12), a war for which they are divinely equipped.*** [Best, 173f]

not only in this age but also in the one to come — οὐ μόνον ἐν τῷ αἰῶνι τούτῳ ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐν τῷ μέλλοντι [ou monon en tō aiōni toutō alla kai en tō mellonti] Wuest: The word for 'world' is not 'kosmos,' the created universe; but 'aion.' It means 'age' and it speaks of duration. ***Christ is not only above all at the right hand of God but He is also there permanently!*** We deal with time in three tenses: the past, present and the future. In Ephesians there is much emphasis upon the present — we are presently redeemed, 1:7; 2:5; we are presently seated in the heavenlies, 2:6; we are presently his workmanship, 2:10; and are given practical injunctions for holy living, chaps 4-6. Christ's rule does not end here however. In the future God will unite all things in Christ, 1:10; redeem His purchased possession, 1:14; demonstrate the riches of His grace in the saints, 2:7; redeem those He has sealed, 4:30; inherit the kingdom of God, 5:5; present the assembly spotless, 5:27; and reward believers for their good works, 6:8. [Hoehner, 281f] "The explicit mention in 1:21 of the two ages, a notion found in some Jewish apocalypses, provides the only reference in the Pauline corpus to both ages (cf. Matt 12:32). Paul himself saw Christian believers as those 'upon whom the end of the ages has come' (1 Cor 10:11) and in a number of places sets believers over against 'this age' (cf. Gal 1:4; 1 Cor 1:20; 2:6, 8; 3:18; 2 Cor 4:4; Rom 12:2). When speaking of a present experience of the benefits of the age to come he will often do so in terms of the Spirit or, as in the eschatology of the apocalypses, with reference to the heavenly dimension. It is striking that here in Ephesians where 'realized' eschatology is so much to the fore, this reference to 'the age to come' treats it as still future (cf. also 2:7). The writer is not here concerned with the Pauline overlap of the ages, but ***the two ages represent the present and the future in conventional Jewish manner. It is true that the writer's emphasis on Christ's exaltation to heaven and its benefits for the Church indicates clearly that he believes the age to come has already been inaugurated.*** His view in 1:10 also is that the administration of the fullness of times is already under way. But his use of language in 1:21 remains traditional and has not been coordinated with that perspective. ***It is also true, however, that the future age will bring nothing new, for the victory of Christ's exaltation above every name in this age continues into the coming age.*** This need not imply that temporal categories are of no significance for the writer. The very fact that he still uses traditional two-age terminology is part of the evidence that in Ephesians realized eschatology has not obliterated all futurist eschatology (cf. also 1:14; 2:7; 4:30; 5:5, 27; 6:8, 13)." [Lincoln, 65]

v. 22a — and he subjected everything under his feet — καὶ πάντα ὑπέταξεν ὑπὸ τοὺς πόδας αὐτοῦ [kai panta hupetaxen hupo tous podas autou] Hoehner emphasizes the fact that the verbs here are joined grammatically: *he raised* and *he subjected*. ***"Paul references Ps 8:6, even though it is not a Messianic Psalm. Psalm 8 talks about how God had made man the vice-regents to rule over the created world. But the writer of Hebrews states that Adam lost that right to rule when he sinned (Heb 2:6-9). This right to rule was then given to Christ, the Second Adam.*** In 1 Cor 15:24-28 Paul combines this quote from Ps 8 with Ps 110 and applies Ps 8 to the overthrow of the enemies. While there is nothing here in Ephesians that explicitly speaks of this overthrow, it is nevertheless implied by the fact of Christ being at the right hand of God and everything under His subjection. Besides, if Paul did not want to emphasize the aspect of the enemies being under subjection to Christ, Paul could have only quoted the first half of Ps 8:6 instead of the last half: ***"You made him ruler over the works of your hands; you put everything under his feet"*** (Ps 8:6 NIV). ***"In him, as the Ideal Man ('Son of Man' as well as 'Son of God') Psalm 8 attains its absolute fulfilment."***

PUT ALL THINGS UNDER, SUBJECTED ALL THINGS UNDER — Subjected = ὑπέταξεν [hupetaxen] originally meant “to place or arrange under or be subjected.” It was a military term and could literally be translated “to order oneself under a leader.” The word is used 38x in the NT, 23x by Paul with the basic meaning of “to be subject, to be subordinate.” “A good example of this is in Rom 8:7 where Paul states that the mind-set of the flesh is hostile to God because it is not subject to the law of God, nor can it be. Hence, for Christ to subject everything, enemies must be overthrown. It must be kept in mind that the subject of the verb is God who subjected everything under Christ’s feet. This fact empowers Christ to accomplish the subjection of all things.” [Hoehner, 283] “The act referred to, therefore, by the aorist of hupotasso, may be the definite gift of absolute dominion consequent on the exaltation. *The raising of Christ to God’s right hand was followed by the placing of all things under His feet and making Him sovereign over all.*” [Wuest, 56]

CHRIST MORE THAN RULES, HE CONQUERS — Under his feet = is a metaphor that has the idea of victory over enemies. “It is used of the winner of a duel who places his foot on the neck of his enemy who has been thrown to the ground, like Joshua who had his generals place their feet on the necks of the five defeated Amorite kings (Josh 10:24; cf. 2 Sam 22:39). Similarly, *everything is subjected under Christ’s feet, meaning that everything is currently under his control, both friends and enemies.* This coincides with 1 Pet 3:22 where it states that Christ has gone to heaven and is at the right hand of God, having the angels, authorities, and powers subject to him.... The magnitude of God’s power described in verse 19 is great and has been manifested first in his work in Christ by raising him from the dead and by seating him at his right hand in the heavenlies, and now second in subjecting everything under Christ’s feet.... *It is one thing to be given the position of authority, that is, seated at the right hand of the Father; it is quite another to be allowed to exercise that authority.*” [Hoehner, 282ff] “The central thought continues to be God’s action in relation to Christ. If Christ sits at God’s right hand (v. 20), a position of authority, then the universe has been made subject to him and this is now expressed with a vivid metaphor drawn from Ps 8.6.... *Christ has, as it were, his foot placed triumphantly not only on the necks of the powers but on everything within the universe. It is not sufficient to say (v. 21) that Christ is superior to the powers in the same way as a duke is to an earl, for the earl may not be subject to the duke though the latter ranks higher. The powers are not merely inferior to Christ, they are subject to him.*” [Best, 180f]

THE VICTORY HAS ALREADY BEEN WON — “[T]he destruction of the cosmic powers is not at the parousia [the second coming of Christ] but at the exaltation of Christ.... In reality Christ is at the right hand of the Father and everything has been subjected under his feet, but the full exercise of that power will not be evident until his return. This corresponds to 1 Cor 15:24-28 where it states that God has subjected everything under Christ’s feet and that in the end, Christ will subject all enemies and will hand the kingdom over to God the Father. *At the present, the manifestation of this control is not always evident to us, for there are many inequities, injustices, disasters, unholy actions, and evidences of outright defiance against Christ and God. However, Christ is exercising control without it being obvious to humankind. Without his control, things would be much worse. Hence, he has the right to exercise his control but chooses not to fully exercise it immediately in every instance of violation against God’s holy character.*” [Hoehner, 283f]

IN SUMMATION ... — Wayne Barber: “The term under His feet in their culture referred to the place of total defeat, to the place of complete subjection. Now this is very, very important. Every rule, every authority, every power, every lordship, every name that is named, and you can exhaust every one of them, He is high above it, and they’re all subjected to Him. They’re under His feet. They’re already defeated folks. They’re up under His feet. Our minds usually turn to earthly rulers, but in the Jewish culture the terms there, rule, authority, power, and lordship, are terms they would use for spiritual, angelic rule and dominion and power.

“Paul, I believe, is beginning to set the stage for what he’s going to bring out in chapter six. He wants you to make sure that down here anything you see on this earth is trivial. The spiritual powers of angels are far greater. We know that we have an adversary who is the devil and his demonic fallen angelic host. We know that they’re there. It’s very important in Scripture to realize that they’re there. But folks what he’s saying is you take all of their power, sum it up, and again they don’t compute when it comes to His authority and to His power.

“That’s why he’s praying for the Ephesian believers. When I was in Ephesus, modern day Turkey, and walked up that long street and saw the Temple of Artemis, I began to realize that every other shop had some kind of idol that they were selling in those little shops. They were the most idol worshipping people. Satan had a stronghold in Ephesus like you wouldn’t believe. What Paul is saying is, “Hey, folks, you think that’s powerful? Hey folks, He’s seated in the highest place of authority and honor and lordship” They don’t even compute when it comes to His power.

“You’re asking, Okay, if He’s in a perfect place of authority and lordship, how come evil still exists in this world? Now that would be an intelligent question to ask at this point. Why does it say in I Corinthians 15 He must reign until all the enemies, and death being the last one, are conquered? I thought it said He’s already been given that place? Oh, He has. But folks He hasn’t chosen to manifest that to everybody else down here on this earth yet. He does what He does when He gets ready to do it. A lot of people are saying -Oh no! Christ does not reign. The devil reigns on this earth. Oh no! God reigns over him and don’t forget that. However, He’s allowing him to do what he’s doing because by allowing him to do it He’s purifying His church, and He’s readying the world for the final judgment. They’re going to find out one day that He is in that place of power.” [from <http://www.preceptaustin.org>, Sep 19, 2013]