

Likewise, in Rom 11:29 the divine calling of Israel to Himself (which forms a paradigm for God's eternal election of all whom He will save) is stated by the Apostle to be unchanging and irrevocable, thus fulfilling the Abrahamic promise "in your seed all the nations of the earth will be blessed."¹

From the standpoint of the gospel they [unbelieving Israel] are enemies for your sake, but from the standpoint of God's choice they are beloved for the sake of the fathers; for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.

The point Paul is making in this text from Romans is that God's "calling" always brings about His purposes. On a national basis, the calling of Israel will inevitably display God's faithfulness, for even when Israel is disobedient, God remains faithful and thus reveals Himself to be holy, righteous, and good, as well as omnipotent, securing for Israel a special function in the course of world history.

Likewise, in our text the two additional requests for the Ephesians which are contained in Paul's prayer are viewed as the inevitable outcome of God's sovereign "calling." For the outcome of God's calling the elect to salvation is that they will eternally stand as evidence of God's faithfulness to His promise, and as children in His family who have been recipients of His infinite love and grace and objects of His omnipotence to bring about His decreed will.

...what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints – Paul seeks for words to describe in finite human language what are the infinite dimensions of God's glory. He writes of "the riches" (πλοῦτος, *ploutos*) of God's glory as evidenced by His inheritance in the saints. Paul has already used this word in 1:7 to describe "the riches of God's grace," and he will use it three more times in Ephesians.² *Ploutos* commonly carries the sense of "wealth" or "an abundance of earthly goods." So here, in using the word to describe the "wealth of God's glory," Paul is describing what God greatly enjoys or considers of great importance.

Paul prays that the Ephesians would understand that they, along with all true believers, are reckoned by God as His inheritance which brings to Him great glory, and therefore is a display of His wealth. Having described the inheritance that every child of God has, i.e., eternal life in God's family, an inheritance which is guaranteed by the earnest

1 Gen 12:3; 18:18; 22:18; 26:4; 28:14.

2 Eph 2:7; 3:8, 16.

and seal of the Ruach HaKodesh, Paul here describes the inheritance which belongs to God. Even though God is the owner of everything,¹ His inheritance, that which is His through purchase at a price of infinite value, is summed up in the multitude of people which no man can number, from every nation, tribe, and family, whom He has redeemed to be His own children.

What is more, it is God's inheritance which reveals to the whole universe the surpassing glory of His greatness, for it shows not only what God can make out of nothing, but more than that, it shows what God can do in redeeming those who were "by nature" His enemies. This fact, that all who are "in Messiah" are God's inheritance and the sum of His "wealth," is the primary basis for the redeemed people to recognize their eternal worth and value. Rather than seeking our primary significance in what we have been able to accomplish, the scriptures teach that the ultimate value which each child of God possesses is that he or she is the very joy and wealth of God Himself, for He delights in His inheritance. Further, we who are His inheritance have the supreme privilege and high obligation to be trophies of His abundant grace and living testimonies of His supreme glory.

It is clear in our context that when Paul refers to God's inheritance, he is not limiting this to Israel or even to the remnant of Israel, because Paul specifically refers to "the saints" (ἐν τοῖς ἁγίοις, *en tois hagiois*) as that which makes up God's inheritance, and this clearly includes all believers, whether from Israel or from the nations. In this regard, note how Paul uses the same phrase, "the riches of His glory," in Colossians when he describes the message of the "word of God," the very means by which the elect are called to salvation in Yeshua.

the mystery which has been hidden from the past ages and generations, but has now been manifested to His saints, to whom God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Messiah in you, the hope of glory. (Col 1:26–27)

We see then why Paul prays for the Ephesian believers that they

1 Gen 14:19 – וַיְבָרֶכְהוּ וַיֹּאמֶר בְּרוּךְ אַבְרָם לְאֵל עֲלִיּוֹן קִנְיָ שָׁמַיִם וָאָרֶץ: "He blessed him and said, "Blessed be Abram of God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth," where the translation "Possessor" could better be understood as "Owner" since the verb קָנָה (*qānah*) very often carries the sense of "to buy," "to purchase." Thus, "owner" better fits the context of Gen 14 (cf. Ps 50:10)

would understand who they are in Messiah. For they, along with all the redeemed in Yeshua, are valuable to God, making up His own eternal inheritance. Surely knowledge and possession of this wonderful truth gives joy, courage, and strength to all who are God's children, enabling them to walk worthy of their calling. For if the redeemed are God's inheritance, then we are assured that He will protect and maintain His inheritance, and thus we are forever secure in the power, glory, and love of God in Messiah Yeshua, manifested in the presence of His indwelling Spirit. And it is this very truth which comprises the third request in Paul's prayer for the Ephesian believers.

...and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us¹ who believe. – It was Paul's prayer for the Ephesian believers that they would "know" these essential truths and that in knowing them, they would be strengthened in their faith to live in a way that gives glory to Him. Not only are we to know what it means to have been called by God to be His own children, and that as a result we are valuable to Him because having purchased us at a great price, we are His very inheritance which shows forth His infinite glory, but are also to know and understand that all of this rests upon the "surpassing greatness of His power toward us."

In gathering together these words, Paul seeks to express the infinite and eternal greatness of God's power in limited human language. He "heaps one word on another to express the greatness of God's power that is available to the believer."² He first uses the word ὑπερβάλλω (*hyperballō*), a verb that carries the idea "to attain a degree that extraordinarily exceeds a point on a scale of extent, go beyond, surpass, outdo."³ This verb is found only five times in the Apostolic Scriptures, three of which are in Ephesians (1:19; 2:7; 3:19).⁴ He combines *hyperballō*, "surpassing" with "greatness" (μέγεθος, *megethos*), a Greek word found only here in all of the Apostolic Scriptures. *Megethos* generally carries the idea of "magnitude," "size," or "height," as used in the Lxx,⁵ but can also have the sense of "excellence" or "strength."⁶ What Paul intends to con-

1 The variant in some manuscripts (D* F G P 33 104 629 1175 *al* it Ambrosiaster) that has ὑμᾶς, "you" rather than "us" is lacking from ℘⁴⁶ B 33 1739 and other significant witnesses and should not be considered as original.

2 Hoefner, *Ephesians*, p. 268.

3 BDAG, "ὑπερβάλλω," p. 1032.

4 The other occurrences of ὑπερβάλλω are 2Cor 3:10; 9:14.

5 1Sam 16:7; 1Kgs 6:23; 7:21; 2Kgs 19:23; Ezek 19:11; 31:3, 5, 10, 14.

6 BDAG, "μέγεθος," p. 624.

vey by putting these terms together is not only to describe God's exceedingly great power but also to indicate by the use of these terms that His strength, ability, power, and control surely exceeds anything which our finite minds can fully comprehend. In short, Paul is affirming what we hear Yeshua teaching: "With people it is impossible, but not with God; for all things are possible with God" (Mk10:27).¹ This means that there is nothing which we face in our lives that is too difficult for God. Since He has chosen us to be His children, and given us new life in His Son, Yeshua, than we also know that He is able to do more than we could ask or think (Eph 3:20), and He will guard and keep all those who are His, for He has purchased us to be His eternal inheritance. And if anyone needs proof of God's power and His having set Himself to accomplish eternal salvation for all of the elect, the irrefutable proof is in the resurrection of Yeshua.

Note carefully that God has set Himself, with all of His omnipotent power and eternal purposes, "toward us who believe." God, Who is the God of distinction, separates between those who believe and those who do not. This is because the Father has determined that ultimately everything in the created universe should give glory to Yeshua, His Son, for He has decreed that all things should be "summed" up in Him (1:10). This accords with what Paul writes in Colossians:

For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities — all things have been created through Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything. (Col. 1:16–18)

Therefore, Yeshua will be glorified with the Father and the Spirit, for He will be known as the Savior of those who have believed in Him as well as the Judge of those who have not. Paul speaks of Yeshua as the Judge in his speech to the philosophers on the Areopagus in Athens.

Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has

1 Cf. Matt 19:26; Mk 9:23; 14:36.

appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead. (Acts 17:30–31)

Note also Yeshua’s teaching regarding His role as Judge in the final day:

Many will say to Me on that day, “Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?” And then I will declare to them, “I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.” (Matt 7:22–23)

Kistemaker, speaking of the “surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe,” writes:

The words “with respect to us who believe” show that this power is exerted in the interest of believers, of no one else. They alone receive the inheritance.

Indeed, faith in the Messiah Yeshua is the only way by which a sinner may stand righteous and justified before God. Those who postulate another message than this are preaching “another gospel” which is actually no “gospel” (good news) at all (2Cor 11:4; Gal 1:6–7).

19b–21 *These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might which He brought about in Messiah, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come.*

The NASB, in attempting to make the long sentence of vv. 15–23 understandable in English, has added the words “These are” at the beginning of our text, in order to show the logical connection to the previous context. Having encouraged the Ephesian believers by telling them of what his prayer for them consists, he now emphasizes that these eternal blessings all rest upon the historical and irrefutable fact of Yeshua’s resurrection. The hope of His calling, the riches of His inheritance in the saints, and the surpassing greatness of His power to bring about His eternal plan for all who believe, all require the omnipotent, all powerful ability of God to bring it to pass. And this power was demonstrated in the resurrection of Yeshua from the dead. Indeed, the resurrection of

Yeshua is the keystone of our faith.

in accordance with the working of the strength of His might... – This phrase opens with the Greek preposition *κατά* (*kata*), which, in this context, denotes the idea of “in proportion to” or “in conformity to,” or, as the NASB has it, “in accordance with.” The point Paul wishes us to realize is straightforward. The purpose of God on behalf of all who believe in Him and are therefore “in Messiah,” will be accomplished in full proportion to or accordance with the infinite power and authority of God.

Paul uses three words in this phrase to describe the “strength” or “power” of God. The first is *ἐνέργεια* (*energeia*, “working”) from which we derive our English word “energy.” According to some scholars, this noun, derived from the verb *ἐνεργέω* (*energeō*), always describes power that is “actual power” rather than “potential.”¹ *Energeia* is not found in the Lxx of the canonical books. It is found eight times in the Apostolic Scriptures, always in Pauline epistles, and always to describe supernatural power. One time it is used of satanic power (2Thess 2:9) and the remaining eight of God’s power.² A close synonym of *energeia* is the Greek word *δύναμις* (*dunamis*), which, however, denotes potential power. We derive our English word “dynamite” from this Greek word. Paul’s use of this word (*energia*) would highlight in our context that God’s power is active, not reserved or kept inactive.

The second word Paul uses in this phrase is *κράτος* (*kratos*, “strength, might”) and is often used to denote physical strength and is used to denote strength of an army in war as well as the power of a ruler or king.³ In the Apostolic Scriptures it is used in doxologies to extol the power or dominion of God (1Pet 5:11; Jude 25; Rev 5:13) and of Yeshua (1Tim 6:16; 1Pet 4:11; Rev 1:6; 5:13). In our text it emphasizes the sovereignty of God in accomplishing all of His holy will. Nothing stands in His way of completing His purposes.

The third word in our phrase is *ἰσχὺς* (*isxus*), carrying the sense of “ability to function effectively, strength, power, might.”⁴ This emphasizes that God is actively carrying out His purposes and His decreed plan. While to mankind it may sometimes seem as though God is inactive, Paul teaches us just the opposite. God is bringing about His plan

1 See Hoehner, *Ephesians*, pp. 269–70.

2 Referring to God’s power directly (Eph 1:19; 3:7; Phil 3:21; Col 1:29; 2:12; 2Thess 2:11) or indirectly (Eph 4:16)

3 BDAG, “κράτος,” p. 565.

4 BDAG, “ἰσχυς,” p. 484.

and nothing is causing Him to delay nor can anything block His way.

Why does Paul pile word upon word, utilizing the primary terms in Greek to describe “strength, power, might, etc.”? He does so to emphasize once again that not only is God able to do all of His holy will, and thus to carry out His determined plan, but that even when things appear to us as impossible, God is able to overcome anything that might seem to us like an obstacle standing in the way of His carrying out His promises. And the tangible, historical, overwhelming proof of God’s sovereign power is clearly seen in the resurrection of Yeshua.

(20) *which He brought about in Messiah, when He raised Him from the dead* – Having revealed the three primary requests of his prayer for the Ephesians believers, i.e., that they would know (1) “the hope of His calling,” (2) “the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints,” and (3) “the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe,” Paul describes in this verse the full measure of God’s omnipotent power, and he does so by pointing us to the resurrection of Yeshua on the third day and subsequently His ascension to the right hand of the Father. The resurrection of Yeshua and His ascension to the very throne of heaven are the historical events by which He proclaimed to the all people that He was the anointed King of the universe and the High Priest representing His people before the Father.

The opening word “which” (*Hv, hein*) has as its antecedent the noun *τὴν ἐνέργειαν* (*tēn energeian*), “the working,” meaning that the power of God to work in and on behalf of all who are His children is the very power which raised Yeshua from the dead and proclaimed Him to be the victor over all of His enemies. Consider the glory of Paul’s teaching here: God works in each and every believer with the same power He exercised in Yeshua by raising Him from the dead and seating Him at His right hand, so that all things are subjected to Him.

Yeshua’s resurrection is the keystone of our faith, for if He had not risen, then our faith is worthless. In fact, the resurrection of Yeshua from the dead is proof of the final resurrection itself of mankind, as Paul asserts in 1Cor 15.

Now if Messiah is preached, that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, not even Messiah has been raised; and if Messiah has not been raised, then our preaching is vain, your faith also is vain. (1Cor 15:12–14)