

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)

Note well the logic in Paul's statement. He reasons that if Messiah has been raised from the dead, then this proves that there will be a general resurrection of mankind. Thus, the very power of God by which Yeshua was raised from the dead is the power that will bring about the final resurrection of mankind. This teaching of Paul to the Corinthians likewise emphasizes that the power by which Yeshua was raised from the dead is the very power of God by which He will cause all who are His to become more and more conformed to the very likeness of His Son, Yeshua.

For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; (Rom 8:29)

As noted above, v. 19 the phrase "the greatness of His power" utilizes the Greek word *δύναμις* (*dunamis*, "power") which generally carries the sense of "potential power," while the word *ἐνέργεια* (*energia*, "the working") in the phrase "the working of the strength of His might" denotes kinetic power, that is, power in action. Even as Yeshua's resurrection proved His victory over sin and death (the last enemy, cf. 1Cor 15:26), so this same victorious power of the Almighty is that which is, by His Spirit, at work in all who have been called into His family through faith in the risen and reigning Messiah, Yeshua.

This is the same truth that Paul proclaims in the opening verses of Romans, regarding Yeshua Messiah,

Who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh, Who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness, Yeshua Messiah our Lord... (Rom 1:3–4)

And the very fact that the resurrection of Yeshua not only is the irrefutable proof that He is the eternal, holy, omnipotent Son of God and Messiah promised by the prophets, but it likewise guarantees to all who are in Him, that this same divine and infinite power is able to overcome everything necessary to enable our ongoing sanctification and cause us to preserve in Him unto eternal life. Knowing this truth and applying it to our daily lives is why Paul has given us this inspired text. To "know Him and the power of His resurrection" (Phil 3:10) is to live our lives with an unshakable assurance that we are secure in Him and that nothing can separate us from His empowering love (Rom 8:35ff).

It is important to note that here, once again, we are confronted with

the wonderful mystery of the incarnation. For in our texts, Paul clearly asserts that it was the Father Who raised Yeshua from the dead. Yet Yeshua Himself said:

For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life so that I may take it again. No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father.” (Jn 10:17–18)

Here we see the unity of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, for “it is the Spirit Who gives life” (Jn 6:63). The distinct roles of the Father, the Son and the Spirit are yet, in reality, the One God working in accordance with His sovereign plan.

...and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, – Paul is clearly referencing Ps 110 when he speaks of the fact that the Father “seated Him at His right hand.” Yeshua Himself used Ps 110 to defeat the naysayers who questioned whether He could be the promised Messiah.

Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Yeshua asked them a question: What do you think about the Messiah, whose son is He?” They said to Him, “The son of David.” He said to them, “Then how does David in the Spirit call Him ‘Lord,’ saying, THE LORD SAID TO MY LORD, SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND, UNTIL I PUT YOUR ENEMIES BENEATH YOUR FEET? If David then calls Him ‘Lord,’ how is He his son?” No one was able to answer Him a word, nor did anyone dare from that day on to ask Him another question. (Matt 22:41–46)

He also quotes Ps 110 at His trial before the High Priest and parallels it with Dan 7:13.

Again the high priest was questioning Him, and saying to Him, “Are You the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?” And Yeshua said, “I am; and you shall see THE SON OF MAN SITTING AT THE RIGHT HAND OF POWER, and COMING WITH THE CLOUDS OF HEAVEN.” Tearing his clothes, the high priest said, “What further need do we have of witnesses? (Mk 14:61–63)¹

On the basis of Yeshua’s use of Ps 110, Thielman suggests:

¹ Cf. Matt. 26:64, and Luke 22:69.

The psalm probably played a role in first-century debates about the identity of the Messiah even beyond Christian circles, as Jesus's use of it in debates with His opponents and at his Jewish trial implies.¹

That Yeshua is described as sitting at the right hand of God must be understood as meaning "the place of power and authority." Note, for instance, this use of "the right hand" in the Song of the Sea.

Your right hand, O LORD, is majestic in power, Your right hand, O LORD, shatters the enemy. (Ex 15:6)

Moreover, the word translated "heavenly places" (*ἐπουρανίους, epouraniois*) does not primarily denote a specific location but rather describes the "dimension" in which all spiritual powers exist, i.e., whether those giving glory to God and bringing about His purposes (cf. 1:3) or those who are against God and seek to undermine His purposes (cf. 6:12).

Likewise, the posture of Yeshua sitting at the right hand of the Father, is also a metaphor, indicating that the work of offering Himself as a sacrifice has been completed. "Sitting" can be a picture of being at rest. But most assuredly Yeshua is active in the heavenly realm, for "He always lives to make intercession for us" (Heb 7:25), and this is pictured when Stephen sees Yeshua "standing," a posture of activity (Acts 7:55). But "sitting" can also denote a posture of authority, for a king is pictured as sitting upon his throne.

Note Calvin's comments:

This passage shews plainly, if any one does, what is meant by the right hand of God. It does not mean any particular place, but the power which the Father has bestowed on Christ, that he may administer in his name the government of heaven and earth. It is idle, therefore, to inquire why Stephen saw him standing, (Acts 7:55), while Paul describes him as sitting at God's right hand. The expression does not refer to any bodily posture, but denotes the highest royal power with which Christ has been invested. This is intimated by what immediately follows, far above all principality and power: for the whole of this description is added for the purpose of explaining what is meant by the right hand.²

1 Thielman, *Ephesians*, p. 107.

2 Calvin, *Ephesians*, pp. 215–16.

(21) *far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named* – Here, once again, Paul has piled word upon word in order to express the infinite power which Yeshua owns by His own divine being, a power that dwarfs any other power in the whole of the universe. His authority is “far above” (ὑπεράνω, *huperanō*) all other authority found in the universe. *Huperanō* is found three times in the Apostolic Scriptures: twice in Ephesians (1:21; 4:10) and once in Hebrews (9:5). It describes a position above other objects but can also carry the sense of “far above,” as in the Lxx of Deut 26:19 in which God declares that He will set His chosen nation Israel “high above all nations” (καὶ εἶναι σε ὑπεράνω πάντων τῶν ἐθνῶν). In this context, the majority of English translations¹ are right to translate *huperanō* as “far above” when describing Yeshua’s authority in relationship to all other powers in the universe.

The same is true by Paul’s use of four nouns describing power and authority. “Rule and authority and power and dominion” (ἀρχῆς καὶ ἐξουσίας καὶ δυνάμεως καὶ κυριότητος) is finalized by “every name that is named” (παντὸς ὀνόματος ὀνομαζομένου). While these terms are surely comprehensive of any and all rulers, authorities, and any who wield power and authority over others, it seems most likely that Paul intends these to designate those powers and ruling entities that are the enemies of God. For in 6:12 Paul teaches:

For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. (Eph 6:12)

The primary thrust of this passage is clear, that Yeshua is the reigning and sovereign King of the universe, and no power exists that could overpower Him or in any way stand in the way of Him accomplishing His eternal plan of salvation and the defeat of all that is evil. Moreover, Paul may also be combating early Gnosticism by using these terms, for the veneration of angels was part of this heresy. Rather, Yeshua is to receive all honor and glory, for He has a name above all names, meaning He is Himself one with the Father and the Spirit in all aspects of divinity.

...not only in this age but also in the one to come. – This final phrase of our verse is a bold statement of Yeshua’s eternal nature, for His power

1 KJV, EVS, NET, NIV, HCBS, NRSV, REB, etc.

and authority is eternal. This likewise means that all who are in Messiah through faith and the grace of God are kept by the power of Yeshua, our reigning and triumphant King. We are thereby secure in His power, and may appropriate the very power of our redeemer in the spiritual combat in which we are engaged. Thus, Paul is preparing us with this wonderful truth in order to fit us for the spiritual warfare he describes in chapter 6.

22-23 And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the *ekklesia*, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

To “put all things in subjection under His feet”¹ is the obvious result of the authority which Yeshua owns, and Paul is clearly relying upon Ps 8:6 in this verse. And though Ps 8 is specifically speaking of mankind in general as God’s image-bearing rule upon the earth, Paul sees in Yeshua the ultimate Man Who restores mankind to his proper place.

You make him to rule over the works of Your hands; You have put all things under his feet, all sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field, the birds of the heavens and the fish of the sea, whatever passes through the paths of the seas. O LORD, our Lord, How majestic is Your name in all the earth! (Ps 8:6–9)

In our text, the subject of the verb “to subject” (NASB, “put...in subjection”) is the Father. Some might think that such language implies that Yeshua does not Himself have divine authority and power, but only that which is given to Him by the Father. In one sense this is true, for Yeshua willingly submits to the Father, but submission does not imply inferior rank or ability.

We may note similar language in Phil 2:8–11.

Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, so that at the name of Yeshua EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every

1 The Greek would be more woodenly translated “And all things He subjected under His feet” (και πάντα υπέταξεν υπό τους πόδας αυτού).

tongue will confess that Yeshua Messiah is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Phil 2:8–11)

Note particularly the phrase “and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name.” The Greek word which lies behind the English word “bestowed” is *χαρίζομαι* (*xarizomai*) which can carry the sense of “gratify” or “comply.” When Paul speaks of the Father “giving a name” to the Son, he is not implying that this name was previously not the possession of the Son. In the context, it means that Yeshua, Who divested Himself of the glory He had with the Father from all eternity, and took upon Himself the form of servant, is declared to have the name which He always had, but following the victorious resurrection and ascension, He is now universally known to be what from eternity He has always been.

We might use the Olympic games as an illustration. It is not the “medal ceremony” that makes the winner the “gold medalist.” The athlete who has won the race is the winner before he or she ever ascends the winners’ platform. The giving of the gold medal simply verifies and signifies what is already the reality. Likewise, the giving of the Name simply verifies and signifies the One Who is from the beginning, the Son of God, Yeshua.

This, it appears to me, is the same aspect we should see in our Ephesians text. The authority that is given to Yeshua, an ultimate authority in all of the universe, is that which He had from the beginning. In the mystery of the incarnation, He willfully set aside the use of some of His divine power and authority, submitting to the Father, and giving Himself as the sacrifice for sinners. But following the resurrection, He proclaims that “all authority has been given to me in heaven and earth” (Matt 28:19), which means that through His submission to the Father, and coming in the likeness of mankind, He has proven Himself to be what He has always been: the Creator, the Sustainer, King, and Savior.

Yeshua is therefore sovereign over all, for all things are now seen to be in subjection under His rule. The phrase “under His feet” gives the picture of subjects bowing to their King or those who are conquered as under the feet of the conqueror. Those who are truly His willingly submit to Him. His enemies, however, have no choice, for they too will submit to His ultimate and universal power. No one can stand against Him and be victorious.

...and gave Him as head over all things to the *ekklesia* – Much discussion has ensued among biblical scholars as to the meaning of “head” in this verse (and in other similar texts of the Apostolic Scriptures).¹ The primary options presented for what it means that Yeshua is the “head over all things to the *ekklesia*” are either “ruler, authority,” and by extension, “leader” or “preeminence,” or “source,” as in the “head of a river.” Of course, “head,” whether in the Lxx or Hebrew Tanach (ראש, *ro’sh*; κεφαλή, *kephalē*) is most often used to denote the head of a person or an animal. While we might seek to find how the word “head” is used metaphorically, it would seem that a physical approach might be helpful. What I mean by this is that while in the Western world the head is viewed as the seat of intelligence and volition, in the ANE intelligence and volition were the function of the heart. In Deut 15:9 we find the phrase “Beware that there is no base word in your heart” (הִשָּׁמֵר לְךָ פִּיךָ מִדְּבַר עִם-לִבְבְּךָ). And in Matt 9:4 Yeshua says, “Why are you thinking evil in your hearts?”

On the other hand, it appears that in a semitic perspective, the head functions in some way as controlling life itself. That David, after killing Goliath felt it necessary to decapitate him, might give us a clue. Decapitation secures the end of life. Thus, the head is the very source of life as well as being that which gives direction to the body.

This fits well with Paul’s words in our verse. Yeshua is the “head over all things to the *ekklesia*,” meaning that the *ekklesia* is to follow Him in all things, and thus to give Him first place in everything, as Paul writes in Col 1:18. If Yeshua is not central in all that we do in our worship and service to the Lord, then the *ekklesia* ceases to be what God intends it to be. The life we live as believers, we live unto Him, for we are “in Messiah” and He is our life.

I’ve used the Greek word *ekklesia* (ἐκκλησία) in the place of “church” since in our day the English word “church” has nearly lost its meaning. *Ekklesia* was used in a common sense to mean “an assembly of people” who gather for some common purpose. That the mob which intended to harm Paul while in Ephesus is called an *ekklesia* makes this clear.

For indeed we are in danger of being accused of a riot in connection with today’s events, since there is no real cause for it, and in this connection we will be unable to account for this disorderly gathering (καὶ ταῦτα εἰπὼν ἀπέλυσεν τὴν ἐκκλησίαν.
(Acts 19:40)

1 See Hoehner, *Ephesians*, pp. 286, ns. 1-4, for bibliographic data of recent discussions.

In our verse, however, it is obvious that Paul uses the word *ekklesia* to refer to the assembly of believers that comes together in the Name of Yeshua to worship, learn, and to encourage each other in ways of righteousness and sanctification.

The idea that the Father “gave Yeshua as head to the *ekklesia*” means that Yeshua, in all of His power, majesty, and love, has been given by the Father to the *ekklesia* as its Savior, Lord, Sustainer, and Life. This, once again, demonstrates the utter centrality of Yeshua in that which is called His body.

...which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all. – The metaphorical use of the word “body” (σῶμα, *sōma*) to denote the *ekklesia* of Yeshua offers a number of important truths. First is that it describes the *ekklesia* as a living, growing organism that is sustained by the life of Yeshua. Second is that the body metaphor is used by Paul in chapter four of Ephesians to teach that each believer within the *ekklesia* has a given function and it is only when all work together as they should in any given local assembly that the *ekklesia* functions as it should. Third, the body metaphor teaches us that the *ekklesia* is created to grow, to mature, to become what God in the Messiah intends it to be. This is not primarily a growth in numbers, though this is an obvious reality as the gospel is given, but rather a growth in sanctification.

For the final phrase of our verse makes it clear that the *ekklesia* is to be a growing testimony to the world that the God has accomplished His purpose in fulfilling the promise made to Abraham, that “in your seed all the nations/families of the earth will be blessed.”¹ It is through the *ekklesia* that Yeshua is seen by the world to have fully accomplished all of the Father’s will, for the *ekklesia* is made up of a host of people beyond our ability to number, from every nation, and thus stands as the living testimony of Yeshua’s eternal victory over sin and death.

Paul’s phrase “the fullness of Him Who fills all in all” therefore means that Yeshua, in all of His glory and power, is not only able to fulfill the promises of God, but that He is actually doing so in the *ekklesia*. It is by the work of Yeshua, energized by the Spirit that believers in every age are given the knowledge, the ability, and the strength both to be a living testimony to the world of Yeshua’s victory and to be the means by which the gospel message is proclaimed so that the elect are brought to faith and eternal salvation in Yeshua. It is by His fullness that the *ekklesia* is enabled to complete the mission of God’s saving grace.

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