

I Believe in Almighty God

Sometimes faith in God can feel small and inadequate - a bit like spitting onto a Garden in a time of drought, vainly hoping it will be enough to swell the tomatoes, turn up the heads of the dahlias and and make a real difference. You know what? - To those of you who have asked if I'm a gardener, this probably answers your question — even when I make a concerted effort to do well with a garden, it seems to censure against me... less so Gavin though, so there is hope...

In this letter to the Ephesians, Paul - and we are going to go with it being Paul for now, Paul opens with a huge hymn of Praise to God... notice it's not being sung, but it is praise and worship for the readers of this letter to engage with and be involved in.

We notice how this opening Chapter of Ephesians has credal statements in it:

Who is God? The Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Who are we? Chosen to have his grace poured out upon us for redemption.

Again, we find the use of 'lavish' with reference to God the Father's Love in verse 8 just as it is found in 1 John 3 verse 1 "*How great is the love the Father has lavished on us that we should be called children of God!*" The God we know and love, the author of the Covenant, the source of our faith is not paltry in his blessings nor stingy with his love - and this is a measure of his Character... there is such a vastness of the scope of God's great power that we begin to comprehend this as we read these great letters from the apostles to the churches.

Just look at the size of what's going on there in verses 9 & 10: "he made known to us the mystery of his will which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfilment - to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ." This is not spitting on tomatoes in a drought level of power and authority - it is cosmic in its scope, casting the power of God's rule far beyond our knowledge and our abilities to meaningfully 'help God out' in any way... What does God hold within his hand? All Things... What? Like all things here on earth? Well, yes and also all things. That reminder that the scope of God's power is not domesticated like a cow but untamed and untamable, unconfined and uncontainable like - well - I was going to say like buffalo or like the Wild White Cattle of Chillingham - look them up on google! Many a weird and most likely cheap childhood holiday treat was to go and look a herd of wild white-fish cows in a thistle filled field at a distance in the wilds of Northumberland... Not even this image comes close to the Almighty and vast nature of God and his power to save, his ability to bring things under the authority and headship of Christ.

So why is our faith so teensy-tiny?

The Almighty is made so much less than this by the power of human minds and aspirations. We very much live in a world where 'I' is king... no- not 'I AM KING...' the individual, the human perspective, the power of the brain to surmount all difficulties, all situations, all possibilities - and indeed we are made in the image of God and indeed- as Genesis will attest to, it was once eyes were opened to Good and Evil that people hid from God and solved their own problems - Adam & Eve's nakedness was maybe the fore-runner of our enlightened view that we can solve anything or achieve anything... Trusting in Almighty God means that we have to acknowledge our own insignificance - which is a bit of a come-down from when we looked at Psalm and saw that God "Created people a little lower than the angels and crowned them with glory and honour".

These days, we see a problem and we aim to fix it or do something else... Jesus saw people with broken lives, broken dreams and broken families and he sought the solution of the Kingdom of

God - one in which The Almighty is invited to bring the difference that the situation being brought under the headship of Jesus will make. The widow's son is given back to her... by the power of Almighty God... The Social Outcast is given back his place among his people in Gennesaret... The man who is begging at the Beautiful Gate in Jerusalem is invited to receive the presence and authority of the Almighty God and he not only has his legs restored to working order but he also offers a shout of praise to the One from whom his blessings have come... All Praise and Thanks to God the Father now be Given, the Son and he who reigns with them in highest heaven, the one eternal God whose earth and heaven adore - For thus it was, is now and shall be evermore." It is with this shout of praise that Paul opens up the scope of Almighty God to the Ephesians... It is a faith thing... A faith thing that takes root within us and bursts into life with a declaration of God's vastness and authority - yes! Over the things of heaven and earth - but also over the things of our personal situations... our health, our work, our prospects, our education, our calling to service in God's kingdom... all this is under the care of Almighty God. It looks like miracles, but it is the very present presence of God transforming and making whole, making new that which comes under his rule... and in these verses is the most humbling of all statements of faith that describes the Almighty power of God which is part of our very salvation - the very fabric of who we are... Just look at those verses which were selected for today. Verses that unpack like an expanding universe the very purpose and nature of God who loves us...

'... 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 heavenly realms...'

There is nothing like faith in God who chooses to give you power that is at the same level of greatness as that which raised Jesus from the dead and exalted him in heaven... That is the Almighty God whom you love and who loves you and invites you to think of him when you think that its all too much, all too complicated and all too without hope.

Almighty God, brings you under the headship of Jesus and includes you in his rule that is power and majesty and might. It looks like answered prayer and the flicker of light on the darkest day. It looks like hope and it looks like comfort. It looks like the prodigal returning home and it looks like faith the size of a mustard seed that moves the mountain - because actually, a little faith in Almighty God is sufficient that it raises you to the point of enlightenment whereby you know that your only Hope is Jesus and that he is the best and only hope for the world. That through trusting in him, there is an answer to today's horrors and tomorrow's upset. There is a future in a bleak, bleak world and there is a whisper of faith that chooses to spit on the tomatoes in a drought, trusting that what little we offer for the good, God will make up the difference. The same power which lifted Christ from the realm of the dead and released him from the grave, the same power that lifted him and seated him, wounds and all in the the realms of glory is alive in you.

The power of God is mighty to save. Even you. Even now. Even in your situation of hopelessness - he is greater, stronger and almighty...

We Believe in God the Father. The Almighty. Creator of Heaven and Earth.

Praise be to him for ever and ever.

Amen.