

Ephesians 1:21

Verse 21, “**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...”

Far above. So Christ is not just ABOVE but FAR ABOVE. It includes the idea of rank or dignity. Christ is in a class by Himself so to speak.

All principality/Rule. The power of Christ applied in the believer’s behalf cannot be defeated because it far surpasses that of the hosts of Satan who design to defeat it.

Rule means the first ones, preeminent one or leaders. Arché speaks of those first in order of rulership in a community, “the first ones” in the town. The arche is an an authority figure who initiates activity or process. In this context principality reflects a high order of demonic creatures that assist Satan in his warfare against God and His children!

This word principality usually refers to magistrates and civil rulers. But it is also applied to evil angels, as having dominion over men. Colossians 2:15, "And having spoiled principalities." 1Co 15:24, "When he

shall have put down rule.” Some have supposed that it refers here in Ephesians 1:21 to magistrates, and those in authority, who persecuted Christians; but the connection of the word with angels seems to require us to understand it of evil spirits.

Later in Ephesians 6:12, Paul uses the same word to remind God’s people of their war against Satan, “For we wrestle not **against** flesh and blood, but against **principalities, against** powers, **against** the rulers of the darkness of this world, **against** spiritual wickedness in high places.”

Paul does not call the believer to enter into spiritual warfare. He simply announces it as a fact and explains that it is not mere men you face but the wiles of the scheming devil. In military strategy one must never underestimate the strength of the enemy. Paul is certainly not guilty of such fatal misjudgment but gives a realistic report of its potential.

The word "**against**" stands out five times upon the page. We have an out-and-out adversary who is actively and aggressively warring against us, assisted by powerful and wicked allies.

Our true battle is not against our political opponents or family or co-workers or neighbors or any other human agency. The battle is not against people, but against unseen spiritual powers. In fact, the entire human race is under a vicious assault by certain principalities and powers, world rulers of darkness, wicked spirits in high places.

We read an example of spiritual warfare in Acts 13:8-11, “But Elymas the sorcerer (for so is his name by interpretation) withstood them, seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith. Then Saul, (who also is called Paul,) filled with the Holy Ghost, set his eyes on him. **And said, O full of all subtlety and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?** And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season. And immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness; and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand.”

Verse 10. O full of all subtlety and mischief. The word **subtlety** denotes deceit and fraud; and implies that he was practicing an imposition, and that he knew it. The word rendered mischief, denotes, properly, facility of acting, and then sleight of hand; sly, cunning arts, by which one imposes on another, and deceives him with a fraudulent intention.

It is not elsewhere used in the New Testament. The art of Elymas consisted probably in sleight of hand, or trick, aided by skill in the abstruse sciences, by which the ignorant might be easily imposed on.

Paul calls Elymas *Child of the devil*. Being under Satan's influence, practicing his arts, promoting his designs by deceit and imposture, so that he may be called your father. Satan is here represented as the author of deceit, and the father of lies.

Elymas was viewed as the *enemy of all righteousness*. Practicing deceit and iniquity, and thus opposed to righteousness and honesty. A man who lives by wickedness will, of course, be the foe of every form of integrity.

A man who lives by fraud will be opposed to the truth; a pander to the vices of men will hate the rules of chastity and purity; a manufacturer or vender of ardent spirits will be the enemy of temperance societies.

Wilt thou not cease to pervert. In what way he had opposed Paul and Barnabas is not known. Probably it might be by misrepresenting their doctrines; by representing them as apostate Jews; and thus by retarding or hindering the progress of the gospel. The expression, "wilt thou not cease," implies that he had been engaged continually in doing this, probably from the commencement of their work in the city.

The right ways of the Lord. The straight paths, or doctrines of the Christian Faith, in opposition to the crooked and perverse arts of deceivers and impostors. Straight paths denote integrity, sincerity, truth, Jer 31:9; Heb 12:13. Crooked ways denote the ways of the sinner, the deceiver, the impostor, De 32:5; Php 2:15.

Notice how the Lord dealt with Elymas, “**And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season. And immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness; and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand.**”

The hand of the Lord is upon thee. God shall punish you. By this sudden and miraculous punishment, he would be awed and humbled; and others would be convinced that he was an impostor, and that the gospel was true. His wickedness deserved such a punishment; and at the same time that due punishment was inflicted. It was designed that the gospel should be extended by this means.

In all this there was the highest evidence that Paul was under the inspiration of God. He was full of the Holy Ghost. He detected the secret feelings and desires of the heart of Elymas, and he inflicted on him a punishment that could have proceeded from none but God. The apostles had the power of inflicting punishment, in many cases, is apparent from various places in the New Testament, 1Co 5:5; 1Ti 1:20. The punishment inflicted on Elymas, also, would be highly indicative of the darkness and perverseness of his conduct.

God sent *a mist* on Elymas. The word here used properly denotes a darkness or obscurity of the air; a cloud, etc. But it also denotes an extinction of sight by the drying up or disturbance of the eye.

And he went about, etc. This is a striking account of the effect of the miracle. The change was so sudden, that he knew not where to go. He sought some one to guide him in the ways in which he had before been familiar.

A commentator writes, “How soon can God bring down the pride of man, and make him helpless as an infant! How easily can he touch our senses, the organs of our most exquisite pleasures, and wither all our enjoyments! How dependent are we on him for the inestimable blessings of vision! And how easily can he annihilate all the sinner's pleasures, break up all his plans, and humble him in the dust! Sight is his gift; and it is a mercy unspeakably great that he does not overwhelm us in thick darkness, and destroy for ever all the pleasure that through this organ is conveyed to the soul.”

Not seeing the sun for a season. For how long a time this blindness was to continue, is nowhere specified. It was, however, in mercy ordained that the blindness should not be permanent and final. Nothing would be more likely to lead him to reflection and repentance than such a state of blindness.

It was such a manifest proof that God was opposed to him. It was such a sudden Divine judgment; and it so completely cut him off from all possibility of practicing his arts of deception, that it was adapted to bring him to repentance. Accordingly, there is a tradition in the early church that he became a Christian. An early church father says, that "Paul, by a word striking him blind, by anguish converted him to godliness."

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And power. It is not easy to distinguish between the exact meaning of the words which the apostle here uses. The general idea is, that Christ is elevated above all ranks of creatures, however exalted, and by whatever name they may be known. As in this he

refers to the "world that is to come," as well as this world, it is clear that there is a reference here to the ranks of the angels, and probably he means to allude to the prevailing opinion among the Jews, that the angels are of different orders.

A commentator writes, "Some of the Jewish rabbis reckon four, others ten orders of angels, and they presume to give them names according to their different ranks and power. But all this is evidently the result of mere fancy. The Scriptures hint, in several places, at a difference of rank among the angels, but the sacred writers do not go into detail. It may be added that there is no improbability in such a subordination, but it is rather to be presumed to be true. The creatures of God are not made alike; and difference of degree and rank, as far as our observation extends, everywhere prevails."

Charles Wesley alluded to Jesus' rule from above in his famous hymn of many, **Rejoice the Lord is King**
*Jesus, the Savior, reigns, the God of truth and love;
When He had purged our stains He took His seat
above; Lift up your heart, lift up your voice;
Rejoice, again I say, rejoice!*