

**EASTER SUNDAY**  
**A Series on Ephesians**  
**“Power in the Cave” (Ephesians 1:19-20)**  
**April 4, 2010**  
**by Kevin Haah**



**I. Introduction**

Good morning! Welcome to New City! Happy Resurrection Sunday!

We have been on a series on Ephesians. I want to go back to a passage in Ephesians 1 that talks about the power of resurrection.

We are here to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ was crucified for our sins, but God raised him up from the dead. He is risen! But, often even though we are amazed and thankful at the resurrection of Jesus, and the power of God that resurrected Jesus, we pretty much limit the power of resurrection to Jesus, something amazing that happened to the Son of God. But, here's something he really wanted us to know from the depth of our being.

Let's go to Ephesians 1:19-20:

I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know . . . 19 “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.”

It is saying that the power of resurrection is available to us who believe. This resurrection power is not just for Jesus, it is FOR US as well, in our everyday lives, in our struggles, with our own brokenness and disappointments and sin.

I want to talk about how that power works in the lives of ordinary people like you and me.

I want to talk about it by telling you a story.

**II. David and the Cave**

This story actually goes way back before Jesus and it's found in the Old Testament. It's about a man by the name of David, and I want to walk you through a bit of his highs and his lows and how he met God and how he found strength and power in God.

When David was a young boy, a prophet by the name of Samuel sought out David's family and picked out David and said that David had found favor with God. He actually anointed David. Great things are going to happen in this young man's life.

And for a while they did. Sometimes life turns out good for a while. David ends up going to palace and he becomes a favorite of the king; King Saul just loves David. David is his favorite musician. David ends up becoming best friends with the king's son Jonathan and he marries the king's daughter, which was a good career move back in those days. He became a warrior and he was wildly successful in the culture. He is so heroic people actually sang songs about the greatness of this boy David. Everything he touched just turned to gold. He led a charmed life.

Then a funny thing happened to him on his way to the top. It all kind of fell apart and one by one all these wonderful things that he achieved or was given began to be stripped away from him. He became so successful that King Saul got jealous of him, got jealous of the songs that the people would sing about David. He picked up a spear one day and actually tried to kill David, and David has to run for his life. He loses his job, his income, his security. Some of you know what that's like. Then he loses his marriage. Some of you know about that.

Saul was trying to kill David and his wife helps David escape but she ends up being taken back by Saul. Kings could do that in those days and Saul actually gave her to be married to somebody else. So David now has also lost his marriage, he has lost his family, he has lost his position. He tries to go see Samuel, the prophet, who is kind of his spiritual mentor but Saul hears about it, sends soldiers and David has to make another escape. Soon after this, Samuel dies. David will never see Samuel again, never get advised or guidance from his old mentor. He's gone.

David tries to run to his best friend, Jonathan. Jonathan loves David but Jonathan cannot lift a sword against his own father. David has to run away one more time and he will never see his best friend again.

That's how bad it is for David, and then it gets worse. Israel is so hot for him he has to leave it. He loses now his home, his culture, language; think about this. He's got nowhere to go, so he runs for refuge to a city outside of Israel called Gath.

Now, a word about this. Gath is the home of a guy that some of you might remember. He was kind of an enemy to David and his people. Great big guy. David fought him with a slingshot. Kind of a giant warrior, Probably used steroids or human growth hormone or something like that. Anybody remember that guy's name? Goliath. Gath is the city Goliath is from, the city of Philistines. David is so desperate that's where he runs for refuge, to his enemies, to the Philistines. To try to get them to have pity on him, to take him in, he pretends to be insane. He is literally foaming at the mouth. He's scribbling on the gates, but they won't do it. They kick him out and **he ends up living in a cave.**

This is David, who had once been in a palace, had wealth, power, fame, friends, security. He had a future, he was the golden boy, and now all of that's gone from him. He's got no money, no home, no friends, no job, no mentor. He's running for his life. He's living in a cave, a cave of the doomed.

So now let's talk about the cave. The cave is where you end up when all of your props and supports, all the scaffolding and all the gifts and all the awards and all that stuff gets stripped away. The cave is where you end up when you thought you were going to have a great life, do great things, have a great family, and all your hopes turn to dust and it is clear that things will not work out the way you dreamed. A cave is a place where dreams go to die.

And some of you are in a cave right now. You had maybe a vocational dream of what you were going to do and it was really good and it was really big. It hasn't happened. Maybe you lost your job and there's enormous financial pressure on you. You worry about it every day. You wake up worried about it. You are in a cave. Maybe it's a relationship. Maybe you've lost a marriage to desertion, maybe to death, maybe to divorce. Maybe you wanted a relationship so bad, so bad and it just never happened. Or maybe it did happen, but then you were deeply disappointed or betrayed in it. You are in a cave.

Maybe you made a bad decision. Anybody here ever make a bad decision? You find yourself asking: How did I ever end up here? I had such bright hopes. I had such strong dreams and they were really good and now I find I've made decisions and I'm involved in behavior and I don't even know who this person is. How did I end up here?

You are in a cave of remorse. Maybe something happened to you. Maybe you lost your health. It's a physical condition that happened to you or somebody you love. Maybe you find yourself alone. Maybe you have betrayed some values that you thought went pretty deep.

A cave is a place of disappointment, of regret, of failure, of fear. It's a funny thing. Nobody plans on ending up in a cave. We live in a part of the world where we pride ourselves on our ability to do cave avoidance, but sooner or later everybody is going to log some time in a cave. Maybe you are there now, maybe not yet, but sooner or later that day will come. That's part of the brokenness of our world, by the end of life if not before.

What's hardest about being in a cave is you begin to wonder if God has lost track of you. You begin to wonder:

Did He forget His promises?

Does He remember where I am?

Does anybody out there hear me?

Does He know that I'm here in this cave?

Will I ever be anywhere else?

Will I die in here?

So one more thing you need to know. The cave (this is so important) is where God does some of His best work in molding and shaping and re-shaping human lives. The cave, for reasons I do not fully understand, sometimes with all of the props and the crutches and the scaffolding and the awards and achievements and pieces of paper in your life gets stripped away and you find that all you have is God. Then you know God's enough. Sometimes the cave is where you meet God, the God who does some of his best work in caves.

It's a funny thing. When people look back on their lives and you ask them: What made you grow spiritually? In times when you met God and you learned to be patient or to trust, what was going on?

The number one answer is:

It was during times of suffering. It was cave times.

Well, David spent like ten years of his life in the wilderness. Ten years! Everything was going so great for so long. Then he ends up in a cave and spends ten years in the wilderness. He was not entirely alone. He did have some people come to him to form a little community but they were not a real promising group.

This is what the Bible says about them:

**All those who were in distress or in debt or discontented gathered around him and he became their commander.** (1 Samuel 22:2)

David and this band of whiners establish a kind of refugee community in a village called Ziklag. They take wives and they have families and then one day they are gone. They are off to battle. They come back to their new homes and it's gone. Their village is gone and their families—their wives, their sons, their daughters have been taken captive. They have lost everything. The text says:

**So David and his men wept aloud until they had no strength left to weep.**  
(1 Samuel 30:4)

You ever cry like that? Life hits such bottom. These are outlaws and fugitives from their own country. They establish a little refugee village and now it's gone. They are so overwhelmed by sadness, so crushed, they cried until they literally cannot cry any more. They wept aloud until they had no strength left to weep. Ever been that low?

And then for David it gets worse.

**David was greatly distressed because his own men were talking about stoning him.** (1 Samuel 30:6a)

Each one was bitter in spirit. Ever have a really bad day? People really not happy with you? This is David—a fugitive from his own country, his king has tried to kill him, he has lost his mentor, lost his best friend, lost his wife, lost his future, lost his security, lost his reputation, lost his money, lost his home, finds the courage to launch a little start-up in the middle of nowhere with a bunch of whiners and things go south and now they want to kill him.

And then comes, I think, one of the most amazing verses in the Bible. It's just one little phrase. We don't find out much of what's behind it, but:

**David found strength in the Lord his God.** (1 Samuel 30:6b)

That's it. But David found strength, not in his own resilience, not in his brilliance, not in his capacity, not in his determination. David found strength in the Lord his God. Just that one sentence, everything changed.

Now his circumstances were no different at all than they ever had been. Everything outside of him looks just the same as it always has, but David has passed from death to life. It's not about David at all. It looked like the bottom had fallen out of his life and it turns out that David had fallen into the arms of God. David found strength in the Lord his God.

David would go on to quite a remarkable life. Eventually he would be able to return to Israel. One day he would become king. The people would look back on his day with so much longing that when they thought about a Messiah who might come one day to save them, to redeem them; they would talk about such a one as the son of David. If there could only be a king like that...

Again, David would know great highs. He would know great lows. He would achieve great victories. He would make huge mistakes. I wonder how often for the rest of his life, sometimes in his mind, maybe even physically, he would go back and stand by that cave where he once lived and found strength in the Lord his God?

I wonder if you've ever done that? I wonder, cave dwellers that we are, if you know what it is, when everything else is stripped away, to find strength in God because of the resurrection power of Jesus.

## **II. Jesus and the Cave**

It turns out that God understands all about caves. It turns out that caves are why He sent Jesus. It turns out that when Jesus came for a little while, the One Who was called the Son of David, for a little while, just like with David, everything went great. For a little while a lot of the stuff that Jesus touched turned to gold and people loved His teaching and they would come to Jesus—those who were in distress, in debt or discouraged, those who were sick or lame, lepers, the shunned. They would come to Him and He would heal them. He would touch them, He would embrace them and they loved Him and the word spread and the crowds were big, until one day He comes into Jerusalem.

A week ago, Palm Sunday is the day we remember, and they are all so excited about what He could do, about who He could be, about how their lives might change, that they line up the road coming into Jerusalem. The new king has come. They throw palm branches in His way and they cry out,

Hosanna to the Son of David.

And they want to make Him King but He would not be that kind of king.

When they found that out, they all turned and Jesus, the Son of David, also lost everything—His position as a teacher. He lost His safety, He lost His friends who ran away from Him when He needed them most.

The Son of David also had people, huge crowds who were disappointed in His leadership as well. He also had people who wanted to kill Him and this time they did it. This time they did it. They put Him under arrest and they sent Him to a mockery of a trial and they convicted Him on the basis of nothing and they ripped and beat His body and put a crown of thorns on His head.

They nailed Him to a cross and it was all the sin and guilt that put Him there, the most perfect man who had ever lived, only sinless human life. The most unfair death that has ever been inflicted on anybody and it was their sin and not just theirs. It was my sin, too, and your sin, too, that hung Him there on that cross and He died. And they thought—that's it. That's the end of that move and they took Him down from the cross and they put His body away where they thought it would be never heard of or seen again. **Where did they put His body? In a cave.** They didn't know God does His best work in caves.

The cave is where God resurrects dead stuff and there's this group of people who were the followers of Jesus and when He died on the cross, they were distressed, they were dejected and they were demoralized and something happened to them. You have to decide what you will make of what it is that happened to them, but as a matter of history, something happened to them and that something is that they were convinced that Jesus was still alive.

Now that does not mean that all their problems went away any more than it would for you or me. In many, many ways all of their problems were just beginning and eventually they too, those followers of His, for the most part would live quite financially sacrificial lives. They would travel around the world. They would give up their energy.

Most of them eventually would give up their lives for this One that they loved. But what's remarkable is they did it with joy. They just thought they were getting a deal of a lifetime. There was this unstoppable force of life inside them and it just changed the world. It just did.

#### **IV. Us and the Cave.**

##### **And now this is our day.**

Now this news comes to every man and every woman and there is a decision because we are people who live in caves and sometimes it is possible for us to say:

I think I'll just stay here in this cave. I think I will just live here with my own strength. Or I think I will just complain about what an unfair thing my particular cave is. I don't think it will ever be any different. I think that I will not die to everything that I want for myself, to follow this one Man Who is the hope of the world.

Sometimes people make that decision and lead small, miserable, little lives. Maybe I will be successful, maybe not, but their souls wither and die. And then sometimes people kneel down in that cave and they say,

God, I don't want to do life in my own strength any more. I would like another kind of life that I cannot make myself live, that I cannot enter into on my own. I would like for this Jesus, Who was resurrected 2,000 years to become the one that forgives my sins, that wipes my slate clean, that gives me a fresh start. Then I would like every day for Him to be not just the forgiver of my sins, but also my friend and my companion and my leader and my guide. I will seek to do, God, with Your help, with the help of Your Spirit, whatever I need to do to arrange my life in such a way that I can just stay in contact with Him. I'd like to do life like that one day at a time for the rest of my life on this world, and then forever in the world that is yet to come.

You can make that decision and it does not mean that your problems will all be over because they will not, but it means that you can know power—power to be forgiven, power to be loved, power to have meaning, power to grow, power so that when you get to the end of this quick little life you can look back on it and say:

Thank you, God, thank you.

[Jennifer's Story.]

I have never felt God's presence more strongly or been more sure of God's goodness than I am now.

In the cave. God does some of His best work in the cave because the cave is where God resurrects dead stuff.

I want to invite you to take a moment to talk to God right now. Would you bow your heads for just a moment and close your eyes?

God loves you immensely. God knows all about your cave. You've been maybe running real fast and trying real hard not to think about it, but now God knows.

If you have never responded to Him before, you can do that right now. You can do it as simply as saying a prayer like this:

God, you know about my cave, my brokenness. You know about my regret. You know about my sin. I'm tired of trying to handle the cave by myself. I'd like to live in forgiveness and healing through what Jesus did for me on the cross. I'd like to invite Jesus to be not just the forgiver of my sin but also my friend and my guide and my leader, one day at a time as I walk through this life and then forever in the life to come.