

# Christ Above all Earthly Powers

by Mack Tomlinson

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*This sermon focuses on Paul's prayer for the Ephesians in Ephesians 1, emphasizing the need for believers to know and experience the power of God at work in them. The sermon highlights the importance of having the eyes of our understanding enlightened to comprehend the hope of His calling, the riches of His inheritance, and the exceeding greatness of His power in us. It encourages believers to pray for a deeper revelation of Christ and His power in their lives, leading to transformation and assurance of their inheritance in Him.*

**Scripture:** Ephesians 1:15, Romans 8:11, Hebrews 2:8, Luke 11:13, Psalm 8:6, Romans 8:11, Hebrews 2:9

**Topics:** "Spiritual Enlightenment", "Experiencing God's Power"

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## Description

This sermon focuses on Paul's prayer for the Ephesians in Ephesians 1, emphasizing the need for believers to know and experience the power of God at work in them. The sermon highlights the importance of having the eyes of our understanding enlightened to comprehend the hope of His calling, the riches of His inheritance, and the exceeding greatness of His power in us. It encourages believers to pray for a deeper revelation of Christ and His power in their lives, leading to transformation and assurance of their inheritance in Him.

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## Transcript

I would have loved to have seen John Calvin's iPad. He probably loved the Google Hangout with the whole city of Geneva. So, they didn't have the great blessings we had.

And they accomplish more than we do. Leonard Ravel used to say, look what they did in the early church without a whole Bible. Well, look what we do with a whole Bible.

So, may God help us to increase. I want to ask you to turn to Paul's epistle to the Philippians 1. Ephesians. I'm sorry, I said Philippians.

Ephesians 1. It is good to be here with the saints. Jack and Debbie are right here on the front row. So, hi you guys.

And there's Byron and Laurel and Colin and Mallory. They said they'd be on the front row. Here they are.

Hi. So, the rest of you are back row Baptists. The whole world now is kind of a back row Baptist, aren't we? We're viewing from afar.

So, greetings to all of you. So, Ephesians 1. Ephesians 1. Quite an amazing book. We were chatting earlier about the depths, the riches of Ephesians.

It's like a deep ocean. It's like Mount Everest. Every sentence is pregnant with amazing truth.

So I want to read our text, chapter 1, verses 15-23. Follow with me in your Bible. Follow Paul's prayer for the Ephesians in chapter 1. Therefore, I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened, that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power in us who believe according to the working of His mighty power, which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places.

Far above all principality and power and might and opinion and every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in that which is to come. And He, that is, God the Father, put all things under His feet, that is, Christ, and gave Him, Christ, to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him, who fills all and all. Let's bow in prayer.

You pray for me. You pray for yourselves. Pray for your church.

And let's ask God to feed our souls from this text today. Our gracious God and Father in Heaven, we come reverently. How holy and awesome is the place where man meets with God, where a Christian meets with his heavenly Father, the mercy seat, which is Jesus Christ.

And Lord, today we worship You as we meet together as a church. Lord, though separate, still together as a body. And we look to You now for the spiritual reign of the Holy Spirit to come down upon us, to bless Your Word by Your Spirit to every heart.

Lord, give me help. I can do nothing apart from You. I acknowledge that.

But Lord, I am not apart from You. You're with me. You're in me.

So Lord, I look to You, my Helper, my Strength, to speak in a way that would please You only and would be edifying to my brothers and sisters and glorifying to Christ. Thank You, Father, in His name we pray, Amen. There's an old hymn.

I love to sing it. It says, More about Jesus, let me learn. More of His holy will discern.

Spirit of God, my Teacher be, showing the things of Christ to me. More about Jesus, let me know. More of His grace to others show.

More of His saving fullness see. More of His love who died for me. More, more about Jesus.

More, more about Jesus. It's a great hymn. If you don't know it, go find it.

Go learn it. Sing it. Well, that's what Paul is praying for the Ephesians here.

This is one of Paul's pastoral prayers in his epistles for the churches. He has seven primary prayers for the churches. All he prays for are different saints.

And in a way, he'll have small prayers for churches. But there are seven major pastoral prayers of the Apostle for these churches. There's one in Romans 1. In 1 Corinthians 1. Here in Ephesians 1. There's one in Ephesians 3. There's one in Colossians 1. In 1 Thessalonians 1 and 2 Thessalonians 1. Read those prayers this week.

And meditate in them and pray them for yourself, for your church, and for the brethren. This one in Ephesians 1 is one of the richest of all. Now while some of his inspired written prayers for the churches are for their edification, their growth, their equipping for service, this prayer in Ephesians 1 is for their knowledge and their assurance.

For their knowledge and their assurance. Paul is praying that they will increasingly know and experience some greater realities. And those realities of knowledge are, the prayer says, about three great things.

Number one, about the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. Number two, the inheritance that is ours in Him. And number three, knowing the divine power that is at work already in us.

Now here's a question to start with today, loved ones. Ask yourself this. Do you personally know and believe that the very power that raised up our Lord Jesus Christ and it exalted Him to heaven is now at work in you? That's what the prayer says we're to pray for.

And Paul in other places says that this power is at work in us. The same power that raised Jesus Christ from the dead. This is what Paul's prayer here is about.

So Paul's emphasis here in summary, or maybe as far as a thesis sentence for those of you who used to write English papers in school, the thesis sentence, his prayer for the Ephesians and for us is that we would know our full inheritance in Christ, experience it more, that we would know and experience the power of God at work in us, the redemptive victory of Jesus Christ, and the fullness of the church complementing and completing Jesus Christ as head of the church. Because if there's no head, there's no church to be head of. And if there's no church, there's no head of the church.

But this is Paul's prayer for the Ephesians and for us. So let's look at this this morning and let our hearts feed upon it. Now, by way of introduction, I want you to notice verses 15 through 23 again.

His prayer can be viewed in one of two ways. Verses 15 through 19 can be viewed as the prayer, ending at verse 19, and 20 through 23, kind of a doctrinal commentary on the prayer, added to the prayer. The other view is that all the verses 15 through 23 are the prayer.

That when Paul speaks of Christ's resurrection and enthronement, his exaltation as the head of the church is a continuation of his praying. Either way, all the verses are a unified prayer and statement of faith from the apostle's heart toward the Ephesians and all the saints. Now, what does Paul pray here? Well, notice, to begin with, in verse 17, which we didn't read, yes, we did, he prays, he directs his prayer to God as the God of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The God of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Father of glory, he says. He is the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory. So Paul prays to the God and Father of Christ and of glory.

Remember this, Paul knew that who it is we pray to with a right reverent view comes first before what we pray. Praying must be reverent, God-centered, glorious, viewing God as He is with reverence. Someone said recently that some believers speak to God in no better way than they would speak to their peers.

And this can't be the case, shouldn't be the case. It certainly can't be the case in prayer. So Paul directs his prayer to the God of our Lord Jesus Christ and the Father of glory.

So he's praying to the Father for something specific. Notice this, he's praying for something to be given to these true believers. Verse 17, that the Father of glory may give to you what? Well, the spirit of wisdom and revelation.

God's praying, Paul's praying that God will give to the Ephesian church something in time and in experience. And that is a spirit of wisdom, the spirit of wisdom and more of the revelation of the knowledge of Jesus Christ that we would know the person of Christ and have increasing revelation in the knowledge of Him. Now this is praying for their increased knowledge of Christ.

More about Jesus, what I know. So it's what Paul longs for in Philippians. Remember when he said that I might know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, that I might know Him.

That's what he's praying for the Ephesians here, to know Christ more and more. It's Christ that we know and love. It's Christ that we treasure.

It's Christ that's precious to us. It's Christ that is our bonds of peace with God, the Father and our redemption. To know Christ more and more.

This may be the most Christ-centered prayer in all of Paul's epistle prayers. And he says that he may give you more of the knowledge of Christ. Now we could pause and ask the apostle, so how does this come, Paul? How do we get more of the spirit of wisdom and more revelation in the knowledge of Christ? Well, he says it's by the knowledge of Christ.

Father, giving to us increased spiritual wisdom and increased personal revelation. Now that word revelation, not the book of revelation, but the process of God revealing Himself. God is a God of revelation.

The last book in the Bible is called the revelation of Jesus Christ. But with the closing of the canon of Scripture, we're not talking about new revelation coming in addition to Scripture, but Paul's praying here and he uses the word revelation. So the spirit illuminates and brings to our knowledge.

He shows us more and more increasingly by the spirit, the glory and the person of Jesus Christ and our inheritance in Him and the knowledge of His power. That we would comprehend and know the love of Christ. Now Paul prays for that in chapter three in Ephesians.

We're not turning there, but there in chapter three, he prays that we would be strengthened with power by the spirit in the inner man and that we would comprehend and see more of the breadth and length and height and depth of the love of Christ. And to know that love which passes knowledge. Now the Ephesians three, he's praying there to know more of the love of Christ.

But here in chapter one, the prayer, the subject is that we will know more of this hope. The hope to which we're called to. The riches of the glory of His inheritance in us and the immeasurable greatness of His power in us that's always at work.

So for this to happen, and for Paul's prayer to be answered, Paul says this, notice in verse 18. This is what has to happen. The eyes of our heart must be enlightened.

What does this mean? The eyes of our hearts being enlightened. Well, we have a clear picture, don't we? Remember the two on the road to Emmaus? The Lord Jesus comes along as a stranger and wouldn't you love to have this recorded? Beginning with Moses and all the prophets, He expounds unto them all things in the Old Testament Scriptures concerning Himself. And what did they say afterward? Holy heart burn! Did not our hearts burn within us when He talked with us by the way and He opened to us the Scriptures? Their eyes were, and remember then it says suddenly their eyes were open and they realized it was Him and then He was gone.

And then they said that. The eyes of our hearts. We have a new heart in regeneration.

We have a heart that's alive. It's a new heart. And the law of God's written in it.

We have a new nature. And we have communion with God. And so we have new eyes to see, we have new ears to hear.

And the process of the Holy Spirit is to take the things of the Scriptures concerning Christ, to take the glory of Christ, His person, His work, His glorious ministry now in the heavenlies, and to make that more and more increasingly real to us, to open our eyes to see. And that song says, Spirit of God, my Teacher, be showing the things of Christ to me. So the eyes of our heart must be enlightened as the Holy Spirit freshly turns on the light that we will see more clearly, more gloriously, and that we would appropriate that, that we would be transformed into that image that we behold.

We behold Him. We behold the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. And as we do, we're transformed into that same image.

As we behold Him, we become like Him. So beloved, keep beholding, having your eyes fixed on the Author and Finisher of your faith, the Lord Jesus Christ. This is a result of the Holy Spirit revealing to us Christ more and more.

Our hearts see more, and as we read the Word, and as we listen to the truth, and as we feast on the things of God, our eyes are more opened and enlightened, and we know Christ more. Spiritual illumination. When the Holy Spirit shows us more of Christ, we see more, light comes, more clarity, more appreciation, more love, more faith in Him comes.

Paul is praying for the Spirit to give this more to every believer, more of Christ. Now beloved, if Paul prays that for the Ephesians and for all the saints, he prayed it under inspiration for you and I, and for the whole church of all the ages. This means we are on praying ground with confidence that God would do this for us continually.

And it's our need. And we should pray these prayers for ourselves, for our families, for our church, for the brethren that we know and love. More of Christ.

When the Spirit continually does this work of revealing Christ to our hearts, we see and know Him more. And we increase then in the assurance of our inheritance, which He speaks of in verse 18, that you may know what is the hope of His calling and what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints. What a glorious reality.

Well, there's another reality to be seen and known here. Look at verse 19. And what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us, or that's in us, who believe, His power in us.

Now, beloved, we've got to lay hold on this. This week, pray this, that God would let you see more and experience more. The power that we would know more, the power of Christ that is at work in us.

The power of God. That's His prayer. Seeing and believing and understanding it.

The almighty power that's at work in every believer. He says here, the exceeding greatness of His power. That almighty power is at work in every believer.

Now, Peter uses that phrase, exceeding greatness, in, I think it's 2 Peter 2, about God has given us exceeding great and precious promises. But here, Paul uses it about God's power. The exceeding greatness of His power.

Now, we're not to think here that Paul is praying about outpourings of the Spirit or a sudden coming of the Spirit in revival. Those are of God and they're needed and welcomed. And we're to pray for that, Luke 11, 13.

How much more will He give the Holy Spirit? But here, Paul is thinking differently. He's praying that we would understand the power that is always at work in us as a child of God. There's divine power at work continually, 24-7, in every child of God.

This is a great reality. He says in verse 19, according to the working of His mighty power. Now, let's think about these phrases here in the text.

Just notice them. This phrase in verse 19, according to the working of His mighty power. Working there means energy.

It comes from the word where we get our word energy. Energy at work. It's a picture of kinetic energy at work in the believer.

It's continual divine energy at work resulting from divine action toward us continually. The working of His might, His mighty power, end of verse 19. The working of His might.

The adjective there, might, means strength. Strengthening power. Mighty power is at work in every Christian.

Do we always feel that? No. Do we always experience something? No. Do we always feel inspired and know with joy that God is at work in us to will and to do of His good pleasure? No, we don't.

But this says, according to God's Word, the power of God is at work in us mightily, continually, in the hearts and souls of those who believe the power of God that is in the saints at all times at work in us. Now here He's not praying that more power would be given, though that's a truth, but rather that we will know and believe the power that is continually at work in us. Pause.

The question is, what power exactly is this? Well, verse 20 tells us the answer. Which He worked in Christ. The power that's at work in every believer is the power that God worked in the man Jesus Christ.

The power at work in the believer is the same power that was at work in and upon the Lord Jesus Christ in His life, His death, His redemptive work, and His resurrection and exaltation to the right hand of the Father. Think about this, beloved. This is resurrection power that was in Christ and now it's at work in us continually.

Or perhaps not the same amount exponentially, not the same measure as far as quantity because Christ had the Spirit without measure unlimited and the church has the Spirit permanently indwelling us in real measure, but it's the same power as far as the quality, not the quantity, the quality is at work in us. This redemptive resurrection power. It's the power that created the universe.

It's the almighty power that created a man from dirt. His name was Adam. It's the power that was at work to part the Red Sea and the ground was dry that they went across while the walls of water were standing.

That's power. It was power that makes hungry lions in the den act like tame kittens. It's power that caused three men in a blazing furnace to feel no heat and not one hair was singed.

That is power. It's Lazarus' power. It's fig tree wilting power.

It's mountain moving power. It's the power that a fully dead man is made alive forever. Jesus of Nazareth.

It was God's divine power that raised His Son up from the grave. The old song says, up from the grave He arose with a mighty triumph over His foes. He arose a victor from the dark domain and He lives forever with His saints to reign.

He arose. The same power that created the universe raised Christ from the dead and that same power is in us at work continually. Do we believe this enough? Do we appreciate it enough? Do we treasure it enough? Do we pray that we would know and experience this enough? Romans 8 cross-references this.

If the Spirit of Him who raised up Jesus from the dead dwells in you, then He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies by His Spirit. So, beloved saints, dear ones, the very power of God in Christ is at work in you. Not only the power that raised Him, the power didn't stop there.

Verse 20, it was the same power that seated Him at the right hand of the Father. Forty days after the resurrection, what happened? The disciples were out there with Him. And what happened? They saw His body, His same physical body that was raised from the dead.

They saw Him begin to go up physically in the clouds. Wouldn't you have liked to have seen those guys' eyes? They were watching Him go up and they see Him disappear into the clouds. And the power of God took Him right back into the throne room and the angels would have celebrated and He was enthroned, exalted forevermore.

That's the power of God that's at work in us. It's really astounding. The power of God carried Christ to heaven in His ascension.

And that power seated Him and exalted Him to His final position over all things. That's the power that's at work in the church and the Christian. We're to see Christ enthroned in power as He is now.

Paul says, far above all earthly powers, far above all principalities, every name that's named in heaven and in earth, Christ is above all earthly powers. Beloved, if there was ever a day in this March and April of 2020 what the world's going through, if there was ever a time to see Christ above all earthly powers, it's

today to see Him exalted in power. And that power is in you as a child of God at work to keep you, to sustain you, to change you, to sanctify you, to assure you, to give you more hope, more assurance, to make you more like the Son of God in every way.

He is perfecting that which concerns us. And it's by His power that dwells within us at all times. You know, Paul here says that all things have been put under His feet, verse 22.

And Hebrews 2, quoting Psalm 8, says the same thing. You have put all things in subjection under His feet and left nothing that is not put under Him. But Hebrews says, but now we do not yet see physically in earth, in time, space, we don't yet see all things under His feet.

They are, but we don't yet see everything subjected. Hebrews says, but we see Jesus. We don't see everything yet in the earth subjected fully to Christ.

He's reigning over it. It's all under His feet, but we don't yet see that. What we see is Jesus, the author and the finisher of our faith.

We see Him. We see Him who is made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death. Now crowned with glory and honor that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone.

Beloved, He died, He rose, He ascended, He was exalted, and He's reigning. All is under His lordship. Every foe will submit.

Every virus, every wicked nation, every wicked politician, every wicked ruler, all sin will shut its mouth and the King of righteousness is gonna come and mop up and finish it all. And there will not be one square inch, as the great theologians said, on the new earth or in the new heavens where does not dwell righteousness. All things under His feet.

Christ enthroned above all things. Well, beloved, I love Michael W. Smith's hymn. Above all powers, above all kings, above all nature, above all created things, above all wisdom and all the ways of man, you were here before the world began.

Above all kingdoms, above all thrones, above all wonders the world has ever known, above all wealth and treasures of the earth, there's no way to measure what you're worth. Martyn Lloyd-Jones made this statement on Paul's prayer in Ephesians 1. Quote, do we realize the exceeding greatness of His power in us? Do we realize the energy of His strength and of His might that is already at work in us? Do you realize that because that power has begun, it will continue in you? Continue until you find yourself faultless and blameless before His throne with exceeding joy. Augusta's top lady said it this way in a hymn.

The work which His goodness began, the arm of His strength will complete. His promise is yes and amen and never was forfeited yet. Things future nor things that are now can make Him His purpose forego or sever my soul from His love.

Beloved, let us see Jesus. Let us see Him high and exalted by divine unlimited power. And let us pray as Paul prayed for us that we will have the eyes of our understanding open.

We will have a continual revelation of the knowledge of our inheritance in Christ and of the exceeding greatness of His power that is always at work in us. Amen. You pray with me now.

Let's bow in prayer and let's respond to the Lord. What has He spoken to you in these minutes? I want you to pray the sermon right now. Pray what He spoke to you.

And let's ask God to seal His Word in our hearts. Our gracious and holy God and Father, we pray to You as Paul did. We pray to the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the God of glory, and we rejoice today at the glorious truth that the power that raised Christ from the dead and exalted Him above all earthly powers is at work in us.

Oh, Lord, let us see this more. Let us believe it more. Let us experience it more.

To the praise of the glory of Your grace. And now may the Lord bless you and keep you and make His face to shine upon you and be gracious to you. May the Lord lift up the light of His countenance upon you and give you peace through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen. God bless you.

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