

# The Immeasurable but Largely Unrealized Power of God in the Church for the Work

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*The Doctrine of the Church*

By Ty Blackburn

**Bible Text:** Ephesians 1:18-23  
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**Providence Church**  
2146 Buford Hwy  
Buford Hwy, Duluth, GA 30097

**Website:** [www.providenceduluth.org](http://www.providenceduluth.org)  
**Online Sermons:** [www.sermonaudio.com/providencechurch](http://www.sermonaudio.com/providencechurch)

Turn with me in your Bibles to the first chapter of Ephesians, Ephesians 1, this wonderful Resurrection Sunday, I want to focus on the resurrection and the glory of the resurrection but particularly the practical relevance of the resurrection to the Christian life, the practical relevance of the resurrection to your daily experience. In a word, the resurrection is our confidence in our access to power, the power of God.

So the title of the message this morning, it's a Resurrection Sunday message but it's also a message, the 10<sup>th</sup> message in our doctrine of the church series we've been doing, a topical series for a number of weeks on ecclesiology, the doctrine of the church, what is the church. Last week, we talked about the work of the church, the ongoing work of the church, the construction work that we're called to do, and today I want to suggest to you that the resurrection is that which guarantees the power to carry out the work, that is, the practical relevance of the resurrection. It tells you that you are justified, it declares that for all eternity and it also tells you that as a child of God you have access to the very power of God that raised Jesus from the dead. So the title of the message this morning is "The Immeasurable," it's a long title, "The Immeasurable but Largely Unrealized Power of God in the Church for the Work." It's not going to fit across the top of a page. The immeasurable but largely unrealized power of God in the church for the work. God has called us to things that are humanly impossible and the fact that we think they're humanly possible is because we have too low a view of what we're called to do.

We said last week that the work that we're called to do as the people of God is to build the house of God, that is, the spiritual temple of God, and we do that by pursuing peace and by pursuing holiness. We work to promote and experience the peace that God has given us in Christ, real unity, and we also work to pursue practical experiential holiness in our lives. We're not saved because we're holy, we're saved in spite of the fact that we're vile sinners and could never be holy on our own. We're saved because of what Jesus Christ has done. His atoning sacrifice when he became sin for us on the cross and it absorbed the full wrath of God against our wickedness and our sin, and then he gives us his perfect righteousness but once we've come to him by faith, we're born again, we are created anew, we're called to pursue holiness, not to earn anything but because we have been given everything as an aspect of our gratitude and worship to the Lord.

So we pursue holiness, we pursue peace, and strictly speaking these things are humanly impossible. It's impossible to have peace in broken relationships, the peace of God. I'm not talking about a human peace, that sort of pretend peace. When there's breaches in relationships and we just choose to kind of pretend that it's not there, that's not the peace of God. The peace of God is agape love transforming hearts so that there's the oneness of heaven is our experience and God wants to do that in a group of people who because we still have remaining sin in us, though we're born again, though we have been transformed. Those of you who know Jesus, you've been born again, you're transformed but you still have remaining sin, and because of that when we get together we will offend one another, we will hurt one another, we will bring about divisions among one another. There will be wounds that are deep and real and those will not be overcome to pursue peace apart from the power of God being made known. We don't just pretend that things are okay. We pursue peace by really clinging to Christ and experiencing his power to change our hearts from bitter unforgiving hearts to true full forgiveness and grace toward one another.

And sin, the same thing, you can't really experience holiness, holiness biblically we saw last week is not just to stop sinning, it's to be separated, remember holiness means to be separate, to be set apart from sin but unto God. But you're turning away from sin so that you can have more fellowship with God on your daily walk, that you want the Lord more. The Bible is not a 12 step method. 12 step methods are fine for unbelievers, they help restrain sin but they're just basically unbelievers are exchanging one idolatry for another. They turn away from some addiction to another form of idolatry, something else they worship rather than God. And we should not cast aspersion on those things and we don't but for the Christian, you're called to a higher way mode of life. The Christian pursuit of holiness is not self-help and self-improvement, the Christian pursuit of holiness is devotion to God by turning away from sin.

So you see that what we're called to, the impossibility of these things humanly is what makes us need the power of God, and the resurrection is God's great testimony, irrefutable testimony to the truth of his word, the glory of his Son, and the power that is available to his people. That's what this is talking about in Ephesians 1. We're going to be focusing on verses 18 to 23 but I want us to read verse 15, start at verse 15 so you see the context because this is a prayer of the Apostle Paul for the Ephesian church and so it would be his prayer for you and me today. In his prayer essentially you're going to see that we have a problem as Christians, this is the problem. He's talking to believers. He's talking to people who have been saved and he says, "We have a problem and the problem is that we can't see reality." We cannot see what is truly, absolutely, factually true in our lives. We can't see it. It's not discernible to our five senses. It's not instinctive. These realities he's going to share are not instinctive, they're not arrived at through empirical investigation or human reason nevertheless they are absolutely fundamentally true. Just because you can't see something doesn't mean it's not true. Just because you can't hear something doesn't mean it's not true. There are sounds that you can't hear that your dog can hear, does it mean it doesn't exist because you can't hear it? No, it means you don't have the capacity to hear the sound. Can you see electricity? No, you can't see it. You see its effects, though, don't you? When you shock someone, you know, get a little charge

someway you don't know how it happened and suddenly, this happened to us the other day, we were, Patty and I, every time we touched we're shocking each other. Static electricity builds up but I couldn't see it, she couldn't see it in me. No, but you experience it and you feel it. So is the wind, Jesus says. You can't see the wind but look at its powerful effects.

So we cannot see spiritual realities. We cannot see the invisible realities in the universe, cannot see them with our eyes, and even after you come to know the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior, it doesn't change your human vision. You still can't see it. So Paul is going to pray that God would open the eyes of our hearts to see three things. He's going to say you need to see the hope of your calling, you need to see the glory of your inheritance, and you need to see the surpassing greatness of his power. We're going to focus on the third because that's where Paul focuses. As we read this in just a moment, you're going to know that he's going to give these three things. You need to see all three. He says, "I'm praying that the eyes of your heart will be opened, that God's Spirit will give you revelation and understanding and you'll know these things that you can't see, you'll know the hope of His calling, you'll know the glory of His inheritance, you'll know the surpassing greatness of His power." But what you're going to see is he devotes five words to the first point, the hope of his calling. He devotes 11 words to the second point, the glory of his inheritance in the saints. He devotes 106 words to the surpassing greatness of his power, 106 words. Five whole verses, a half verse for the first point and a half verse for the second point, and five verses for the third point. This explains why sometimes my outlines are imbalanced. You see this is just biblical. Anyway, couldn't resist the opportunity to make that point.

So we're going to focus on the third point exclusively because that's really what Paul is wanting to tell us and that's where he brings in the resurrection as proof of this power. You and I need the power of God and this is our testimony that we have access to. So the title of the message, "The Immeasurable but Largely Unrealized Power of God in the Church for the Work." Ephesians 1, chapter 1, verse 15,

15 For this reason I too, having heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus which exists among you and your love for all the saints, 16 do not cease giving thanks for you, while making mention of you in my prayers; 17 that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him. 18 I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, 19 and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might 20 which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, 21 far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. 22 And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all

things to the church, 23 which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

Let's go to the Lord in prayer.

*Our Father, how grateful we are for Your word and for the living Word, the Lord Jesus Christ. We thank You, Lord, that we celebrate this weekend His sacrificial death, His atoning sacrifice on the cross in which He paid for the sins, every single sin of everyone who would ever believe, and He was able to say, "It is finished" on the cross. And we thank You for testifying that His sacrifice was accepted in an irrefutable way by raising Him for our justification. It was impossible for Him to be held in death's power because He had not sinned Himself. And Lord, we come this morning asking that You would open the eyes of our hearts. We pray exactly what Paul prayed, Lord, that You would enlighten us in our inner man that we could understand the realities to which You have called us and the power which is available to us that we might, Lord, live in ways that are pleasing to You, that we might not look at the things which are seen but the things which are unseen for the things which are unseen are eternal. And we pray this in Jesus' name and for His sake. Amen.*

So the immeasurable power of God. It's unrealized. It's unrecognized largely in many of our lives and in the church. We can't fully comprehend this and we need to seek to understand this reality and to tap into this power. He mentions those three invisible things we can't see. We need the Holy Spirit, he says the Spirit of wisdom and revelation. He's speaking of the Holy Spirit's ministry to give wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of God in verse 17. In verse 18, that the eyes of your heart, that is, your inner man, that's what the heart is biblically, the inner person, that you may in your inner man be able to see and to know the hope of his calling.

I want to say a brief word about the hope of his calling and the glory of his inheritance. There's a sense in which he says you can't see these realities. If you could, Paul says, he's writing to the Ephesians and saying, "If you could see these things it would make such a difference in your life and I'm praying that you'll be able to, that God by His Spirit will show you these things." And he's even writing this letter and saying what he's saying to help them. This is part of the answer to his prayer. He's giving them a window into these invisible realities in these verses.

But you need to know these three things. The hope of his calling, so this is still in the introduction, we're not into the main points yet. The hope of his calling speaks of the past, that if you could understand as a believer who's been born again, if you could really see what happened when God called you at the moment he effectually by his Spirit called you out of darkness into his marvelous light, 1 Peter 2:9, if you could see that calling, the power with which he took you from being someone who was dead in your trespasses and sins, going your own way, and God called you, if you could really see that and just feel it and hold onto it, capture it, it would give you such hope, it would fill you with hope if you could see God's past work.

Then he says not only that but I want you to be able to see, I want you to have the eyes of your heart opened to see the glory of his inheritance in the saints. He says now to your future, if you could see what God has in store for you in the future, Christian, if you could see that today, it would dramatically impact your life. If you could see what it's going to be like to be in the presence of God forever, if you could see what it's like to be in heaven, to be surrounded with other brothers and sisters where there is no more sin and we are truly one in the presence of God, beholding the face of our Savior, looking into the eyes of Christ, if you could see that it would make such a difference. So if you could see where you came from, if you could see where you were going, but then he says, "What I really need to spend time talking to you about is if you could understand your present, hope of calling past, glory of inheritance future, the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe in the present, if you could understand the exceeding greatness of His power, the surpassing greatness of His power, this would make such a difference in your life." And you need to pray for this, you need to continually pray that God will give you eyes to see, that the longer that we live in Christ, the more we will see that which is unseen, the more we will see the hand of God, the more we'll see the power of God.

I said he spends 106 words on this. When he gets to the power of God in our lives, the surpassing greatness of his power, it's as if, Martyn Lloyd-Jones says, he exhausts every single word he can piling superlative on top of superlative to try to describe the vast infinite magnitude of his power that's at work in you. And it's like a dictionary, all the dictionaries in the world if you brought them together and you got all the best words for power and you piled them on top of one another, it still would be inadequate to describe the power of God in what Paul is trying to say here.

And this power is available, so now think about that. You and I need power and he's saying it is richly available. I mean, just look at the text. I'm looking at the New American Standard, that's what I'm reading from, when he says in verse 19, "what is the surpassing greatness of His power." He doesn't just say the greatness of his power but the surpassing greatness. This word "surpassing" means "over, above and beyond." You transliterate this Greek word into our English word "hyperbole." When someone speaks in hyperbole, and this is not what the word meant originally but you can see how there's an extension of the meaning, the meaning of hyperbole in English is different than this, huperballo that this word comes from. Huperballo means "to cast over, above and beyond." But think about hyperbole, it's somewhat instructive. Hyperbole is when you use extreme exaggeration to make a point. You go over, above and beyond to really press home a meaning. I mean, like this, you know, a kid may say, "Oh, look, I just tracked in mud. Mom's going to kill me." That is hyperbole hopefully. "I've told you a million times." That is hyperbole. It's impossible to tell someone a million times in a human lifetime. That's hyperbole, right? But you're making a point. You're going over, above and beyond to make the point. Well, this is the sense in which God is saying if you take all of the hyperbole that you can humanly about power and you add it up, you're still not to the reality of the truth of the power of God available to you in Christ.

The next phrase he uses in verse 19, "in accordance with the working of the strength of His might." Do you see how he's laying on top word after word. The word translated "working" is the word "energeia," you see the word "energy" there. It means "work in action; power in action." Energeia. Energy. And so he's saying the surpassing greatness of his power in accordance with the working, the energy of the strength of his might, and he piles up two other words here, the strength, which is a word for power again, often translated power but it means overcoming power, it means power in the face of opposition, prevailing power. So in the energetic working of the prevailing power of his might, his intrinsic power.

So he piles term upon term to say you need to understand what is the surpassing greatness of this power, the working of the strength of his might. Does your life, is your life marked by the power of God? It's the power of God at work in your battle for holiness. Do you see it? Is it at work in your relationships or are you trying to live out the Christian life without the resources of the Christian life? Are you trying to pursue holiness but really in your own strength? Are you trying to pursue peace and restoration of relationships but in your own strength? What a foolish thing to do.

Think about how important power and energy are in life. You can have the right tool but if you don't have power the right tool is not the right tool. You've got to have the energy and skill yourself, you've got to have personal energy to use a tool, then you've got to have a tool that has energy, and when somebody has a tool that has the power and energy, you know, the right tool, the nail gun, the chainsaw, the drill, the pile driving drill. I mean, think about it, the guys, this is more for y'all than, well, maybe some of you ladies are really better at this. I think in some ways Patty is better mechanically than I am but in general I still keep the tools, though, you know? Anyway, okay. But you know, you have the right tool and the right power, what a difference it makes and you can accomplish something, and when you don't have that, you are impotent, powerless. God says we have available the power. It's the immeasurable power of God. It's over, above and beyond all that we need yet it's largely unrealized, it's not recognized, and it's not appropriated. He's saying you have the power of God at work in you and available to you.

Now there are three points now, the main outline. The first point this morning is the need for his power. The need for his power. Paul understands that this Ephesian church, though it's a relatively healthy church, he doesn't have a lot of condemnation for this church like the Corinthian church, much more unhealthy church. The Ephesian church is a fairly sound church, has its problems later on in Revelation when you have the seven churches but it's still a pretty decent church in Revelation even. Yet he understands that even though this church is pretty sound and healthy, they need to have God open their eyes to see the reality that they can't see and so the need is evident because Paul prays. You pray for that which only God can give. Prayer is the truest expression of humility and dependence. We're asking God to give us something.

So we can't see this, we don't see the power, in the Christian life we're called to pursue peace, to pursue holiness, to pursue progressive sanctification, that's what holiness is, it means to be progressively sanctified, progressively made more like Christ, progressively

putting off sin, putting on new habits, righteousness, but these two things, the ongoing work of the church, the construction of the church are humanly speaking impossible. So a broken marriage, broken relationship in marriage, a husband and wife that are and so often we see this when marriage difficulties, you know, you never have a marriage counseling appointment where somebody says, you know, they always say something like this if you talk about the history, you know, why did you, tell me about how you met each other, what led you to get married? Well, they didn't get married because they thought they were going to have problems. "I thought we'd have some really great problems together. I really just found her really offensive, found him really offensive." No, they loved each other but things have changed over time and now they say things like, "I don't even know, he's not the man I married, she's not the woman I married." Well, really, truly you're never the same person after five or 10 years, we all change, but they're meaning it's a chasm between what entered into and where we are now. I would never have imagined that we could be this far apart. I can't see any way that I could ever love him again or trust him again, or trust her again. The wounds are just too deep. The bitterness and unforgiveness are clouding every interaction and so you can't be in the same room together and have warm, even kind feelings that you have to every other Christian. It's gotten to be war at home.

The New Testament would teach you and me that God loves to take situations like that and transform them and he does it by transforming one heart at a time. He will transform the relationship if he just transforms one heart. A person in that marriage, if they seek the Lord and seek the grace and tap into the power of Christ, they will be transformed in their attitudes and their actions and eventually their feelings toward the spouse, even if the spouse never changes and never meets them halfway, never comes at all, even if the spouse abandons them, you can have the power of God so transform your heart and this is the inheritance, this is what Christ has died to secure for you, what he has risen from the dead to give to you and me. This is what we are entitled to, why are we not seeking it? Why are we not living it? But a relationship can seem like it's impossible but we need the power of God.

Think about the bondage to sin and the pursuit of holiness. Think about your own life, the sin which so easily besets you. How long have you wrestled with that sin? If you're really honest and the Lord knows you, none of us can see you but he sees each of our hearts, he knows us, he knows how I struggle and how you struggle and he knows everything about it, what's the trajectory in your life in that area of sin? Are you making progress now or are you on the decline? Are you just completely stagnant? Have you quit fighting so that you're just leaving it to the side and just forgetting about it? You know, and this is something not just for yourself, not just to think about individually, but the power of God is for the church. It's the power at work in the church so that, listen, when you encounter another brother or sister who tells you of a marriage that you didn't know and so often it's the case, it looks good on Sunday mornings and maybe Wednesday nights but when you really dig into what really is going on, it's so different at home. And it can be discouraging, it can be shocking when that happens sometimes. You didn't know that this was happening. But if we are walking biblically, though we never are unaffected when we see these kind of things happen, we're grieved, we should grieve, we should mourn,

but we're not undone by it because we know a risen Savior who can resurrect anything. When you encounter another believer who's mired in sin at such a level as they open their hearts to you, that even you find startling, and listen, there's so much sin in the world, it's always been this way and the reality is if everyone could see the sin in your life right now, if they could see the sin in my life right now, we would all be just grieved. Look at the man-pleasing. Look at the anger. Look at the lust. Look at the greed. Look at the worldliness that's still in our lives because of remaining sin.

So we need to be humble as we come into each other's lives but there will be times where somebody seems caught in a sin that is so great that as you look at it, it sort of takes your breath away. This passage says in the face of that, though there's a lot of work to be done and it's going to take time and we're not just kind of putting on a band-aid like "Jesus is risen, therefore you're okay." No, it's going to be a long arduous process to get someone out of the mire that they're in, but if you're believing what God says about Christ being raised from the dead, you can move toward that situation in confidence because of the power of God at work in the church and it should inform our hearts and it then impels us forward to the work. And listen, if you've had experience in helping people who are mired in sin, it's so often it's a long arduous process. I mean, when there's really deeply ingrained sin patterns, you have habituated ways of thinking, habits of thought, you have habits of emotion and certain circumstances that happen and it triggers a certain response and there's this habit of responding. Like say someone is addicted to pornography, that's the world's definition, addiction, the Bible calls that, of course, sin. It's not a disease, it's a sin pattern. It's a deeply ingrained sin pattern. But these realities are in the church. We know it, statistically we know this, experientially we know this. But when someone has an ingrained pattern, say pornography, then often circumstances that happen during their lives maybe one of the roots of why they go to pornography is because they're escaping the pressures and stress and their inability to handle the stress in their life. Bad day at work, the heart turns to that. Sense of lack of respect at home, the heart turns to that. And this is all wicked but what's happening is the mind has been conditioned, the affections have been conditioned, and a true believer can find themselves mired in this kind of sin pattern and so then the habits have been formed, actions and practices are formed.

How does that change? Well, the Christian has to learn to reckon on who he is in Christ. He has to start practically applying the power of Christ in his death and resurrection on a daily part of his life and it is a slow arduous process, but as a Christian helping another Christian, we have to believe that the power is there. It is. But we need the power. So you see we can all relate to experiences and situations in our own lives and the lives of those we love where if we really face it honestly, we are completely impotent personally. We have no ability. We have no power. We need his power.

So that's the first point: the need for his power. Secondly: the demonstration of his power. The demonstration of his power. We see this in verses 20 to 23. After he declares the power in verse 19, he then shows us the preeminent demonstration of the power of God. Verse 20, which he brought about in Christ when he did three things, "which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead." That's the first thing, he raised him. Secondly, "and seated Him at His right hand." That's the second thing. He raised him. He



seated him. Now those things, strictly speaking, are parallel in the passage and participles related to the main verb "brought about." He brought about. He worked in Christ when he raised him, when he seated him. And he describes where he seated him in verse 21, "far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come." And the third thing that he did was he put all things in subjection under his feet.

So he's saying the power of God was set on display when he raised Jesus from the dead, when he exceeded him at the right hand of God, and when he put all things in subjection under his feet. This was the greatest manifestation of the power of God and that is the power of God at work in the church and available to you and me. The same power. The power that reached down into death and raised him from the dead. And here again, Paul in describing the glory of what Christ has done, phrase upon phrase, piles phrase upon phrase to say, "Look at the power of God at work in Christ." First he raised him from the dead. That's what we celebrate Resurrection Sunday, Easter Sunday, the resurrection from the dead, the fact that Jesus on Sunday morning having died on Friday, the third day he got up and walked out of the tomb never to die again.

Think about that. Think about the power of death. He overcame the power of death. The man Christ Jesus has defeated the power of death but think about the power of death in your life and my life. I mean, we are completely powerless before death. With, you know, better medication treatments we can kind of extend life but we cannot defeat death. Your death is coming. You're a day closer today than you were yesterday. My death the same thing. Unless Jesus returns, you and I are all going to die. How many billions of people have lived? There are seven billion people alive in the world today, all of the billions of people that have been born, think about the beauty of a new baby and the amazing wonder of life, you see a new life come into the world, what a joy, glory, promise, expectation. You see a little child begin to grow and talk and walk and learn. You see them grow up into the adult they become. And then in their 20s they're still in their strength and vitality physically. In their 30s they're still doing pretty good and we're getting better with like exercise routines and diet and all that stuff, getting a little better at holding onto your previous, you know, what the 40s used to be are the 30s are the old 20s, 50s are the old 30s, whatever it is, you know, we're extending life a little bit. But if you live long enough, you're going to see your body decline. Your hair is going to fall out or turn gray, guys especially. Women's hair, it doesn't fall out and it doesn't gray. Isn't it a miracle? [laughter]

No, but seriously, we all are decaying. Every day we're dying. This world has been subjected to futility, it's subjected to death. Death has passed to all men because all have sinned. Every single person is going to die and how many times do we go to the graveyard in our lives and we put into the ground someone we love and we can think about times when that person was so strong and vibrant and vital and now they're gone and we bury their body and we go home and there's nothing we can do about it. That is the power of death, separation. In all of man's technological finery and all of his advancement, he cannot defeat this greatest enemy and that's what's so glorious about that Sunday morning when God looked down upon the lifeless body of the Lord Jesus and he

said, "Rise up," and Jesus rose from the dead. That human flesh walked out of, the heart began to beat again, the lungs began to breathe again, the face began to smile again. He got up and he walked out and he had overcome and because he overcame, we will overcome just like we heard sung earlier. "I will rise. I will arise because he rose."

Paul says, "Listen, the power that raised Jesus from the dead is at work in you, available to you." But he didn't just rise from the dead – look at this – it wasn't just that he reached down into death, into the place of the dead, and pulled him out, it's that he took him and he exalted him to the very right hand of God. He took him from the lowest of the low because Jesus, remember, when you read Philippians 2:5-11, it talks about the humiliation of Christ, the descent of Christ, he left the glory of heaven, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped but emptied himself, taking upon himself the form of a slave and becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. He's saying he went from the glory of heaven, he took upon himself the form of a servant, was made in the likeness of a man, made in human flesh, then he became a slave, lived like a slave. He said, "I didn't come to be served but to serve." He washed his disciples' feet. He became the sin-bearer, the Lamb of God treated as the worst of humanity, sin laid upon him on the cross at those moments, despised and forsaken throughout his life, experiencing all of that rejection, and even death of the cross. He died. He went into death. He experienced the low point of humanity. Think about it, the author of life died. How can that be? But he did. He experienced that. Fully man, fully God, yet in one person.

Now obviously in his deity he lives forever but in his humanity he died. His heart united with humanity fully embracing it, experienced death, and not just death, though. Paul says even the death of the cross because in Paul's mind he's remembering what the law said, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree." To be hanged on a tree is to be cursed by God and Jesus not only became the lowest of humanity in the sense of bearing our sins, he was cursed by God and afflicted by God and rejected by God on the cross. He went all the way down to that and then he died physically. So think about that, the lowest of the low that humanity can go to he went to so that he could save you and me no matter how low you are. He went lower. In his perfection, his perfect righteousness, yes, all of that absolutely true but he bore our sins in his body on the cross and he was rejected by God on the cross. God turned his back, that's why the sky went dark at 12 noon because God is light and in him is no darkness at all. And there the Son of God hanging on the cross is abandoned by his Father in some ways our minds cannot even conceive of.

So he went from the lowest low of being rejected, being apparently overcome by Satan. Satan is the one animating all of the people that are killing him. Sin is attacking him and he seems to be defeated. It seems that the serpent has stepped upon his head. But no, no, no, the serpent has only bitten his heel. And you see that on Sunday when he tramples the serpent's head and he wins the victory, and he is not only raised from the dead but he is seated at the right hand of God. He's taken all the way from the lowest point of the low to the very highest pinnacle and apex that we can imagine, the right hand of God. And look what he does, he strains language, right hand in the heavenly places, verse 20, look what he says next, "far above all rule and authority and power and dominion." He's far above

every demons, every power that exists in the world for evil and there's real power in the world for evil. There really is a Satan. There really is a kingdom of darkness and they have great power, but Jesus is far above them, so far above them he can't even see where they are except that he's completely reigning over them right now.

Then everything was subjected, put in subjection under his feet. This is a fulfillment of Psalm 110:1 when the Lord prophesies in the Psalm of David, "I will put all things in subjection under Your feet. Sit at My right hand until I make Your enemies a footstool." This is saying that Jesus even now, when he was resurrected and he ascended into heaven, all of the enemies of God became his footstool and even now are his footstool. It doesn't yet appear that completely, the author of Hebrews says this in Hebrews 2. All things are in subjection to him but it does not yet appear that way to us. We can't see it with our eyes, but if you can see spiritually you can that this is the reality. They're only biding time. The work is finished. The victory is won. Christ is risen and enthroned and reigning now over everything. Everything that evil does is still somehow fulfilling the perfect purpose of the one who reigns.

So he's saying the demonstration of his power, how low he was and how high he is. Think about this now: you in your life, how low can you be? Have you ever thought to yourself, "I could have never imagined doing what I just did. I could never have imagined being where I am right now spiritually. Is there hope for me?" If you come to God through Christ and you rest in his finished work and you look at the glory of what Jesus has accomplished, he can take you from the lowest of the lows to places that you never imagined. It's not too hard for God. In fact, he loves to do things just like that. He loves to show his glory.

That brings us to the third point: the experience of his power. We talked about, number 1, the need for his power, secondly, the demonstration of his power, the third point is the experience of his power. Paul says this is supposed to be a part of our lives. I'm praying that you'll see it but it's to be a part of your everyday experience. In verses 22 and 23 when he says, after he says, "He put all things in subjection under His feet," and he gave him, I love this, he "gave Him as head over the church." He's saying, listen, after Jesus had accomplished everything, that he's put the whole universe under his authority, all of the wickedness that you see in the world, all of the power of Satan that you see in the world is still under his complete authority right now. Jesus has his foot on them, on their necks.

He gave him to the church. God says, "I want to give you a gift, My people who are called by My name, I give you the King of kings and Lord of lords as your Head." You're a body, he's the head. You connect to the body, you experience the glory of the head. The King who reigns over all reigns over us. He gave him as head and as we stay connected to him, as we abide in him, you will bear much fruit. You see, if you stay focused on who he is and you're looking to him and you're resting in him and you're trusting in him, you will access his power. Jesus says, "Apart from Me you can do nothing," John 15. But as you look to him in his death, his resurrection, the power that he has made available to you can become real in your life.

Paul in Ephesians is making this point, this need to be connected to the head in chapter 4, verses 11 to 16. He uses the metaphor of the body again, we're a body that's growing. Christ is the head and as we connect to him we are growing up and being built up. Verse 15, "but speaking the truth," this is Ephesians 4:15, "but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love." So as we're connected to the head, we're growing and being built up. We're building the church. He's using the body imagery here but we could go back to the temple imagery. We're on the foundation, we have the foundation of the word of God. We have the structure of the leadership. Now we're supposed to be about building by pursuing peace and holiness, helping ourselves do that, helping others do that. We're building the edifice. We're building up the body. But as you build, stay connected to Jesus. You don't build on your own. That's like trying to operate something without power. No gas in your chainsaw, you're not going to do very well cutting.

So unity and peace and reconciliation are found as we realize who we are in Christ. Holiness and victory over sin are realized by realizing who we are in Christ. I'm going to just for the sake of time just talk about one aspect of this but I would encourage you to read Ephesians 2 and I want you to see this, what God is saying in this book, he's saying in chapter 1, look what all that's happened to you, what all Christ has done for you. Look at the salvation that you have. Look at the power available to you, and then he's going to say this is what happened about bringing peace in chapter 2. Chapter 2:11 to 23 he's going to say, look, you formerly were far off, Gentiles. He's going to talk about the bridge between Gentile and Jew, that Jew and Gentile are now one, that they can have true agape fellowship, oneness now in Christ because of what Jesus has done. And he says you used to be far off but in Christ you've been brought near. Jesus' death, burial, resurrection and ascension has taken you from being far off to being in the very presence of God. You now are brought into the household of God, chapter 2, verse 23. So I want you to look at that on your own, that's your homework.

Now I want to talk about the other, that's pursuing peace and you see it in Christ, and as you understand this is what's happened, when you're dealing with a relationship that's broken now, wait a minute, who we are in Jesus. I've given my heart to Christ. There's nothing that can hinder me. There's things that can try to hinder me but there's nothing that cannot be overcome by the power of God in me. I can love this person with the love of Jesus Christ. I can do it. I can develop true affections for this person that I could never imagine because God will do it through me because the power that raised Jesus from the dead brought back Gentiles from the farthest reaches into the very presence of God, that power is at work in you. So when you want to love someone and you look to them, God will do that. Now it's not going to happen instantly. We wish it was but it's not going to, but little by little, moment by moment you reckon on that power and God will do a miracle in you.

Now I want to talk about the issue of pursuing holiness for a moment and the power. You know, we need his power. How do you experience his power? I was talking about a person who we may find ourselves or someone we care about is mired in sin at such a level that they've lost hope or you've lost hope, Paul says after he finishes this section in chapter 1 which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all, he says, "I want you to understand what happened in the resurrection." He says this in chapter 2, verse 1, "you were dead in your trespasses and sins." He just said Jesus was dead, God took him out of the tomb and exalted him to the very right hand of God and he reigns.

Look what he does next, he says, "you were dead," spiritually, "in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience." This is what we were before we came to know Jesus, dead spiritually.

Verse 3, "Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest." Ugly picture of what unbelievers without Christ look like before God. Unless you grew up in a Christian home, came to faith at an early age, you can relate to some level to that. I mean, everyone can relate to some level but some much much more.

Verse 4, "But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)," and look he made you alive. He took you out of death, made you alive and look what it says next, "and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus." He's saying exactly what he said in chapter 1. God reached down into the grave and picked Christ up and took him from the very lowest of the low and took him all the way to the highest of the high and he says this is true about you. You were dead in sin, you were overwhelmed, you were in bondage, you were completely controlled by it but he took you and he raised you from the dead and he seated you right now in the heavenly places in Christ.

He's saying now if you understand that and believe that, this is how the power becomes yours in experience and he essentially says this in chapter 4 when he starts talking about practical outworking of this, he says you've got to remember that you need to lay aside the old self that was who you were, renewed the spirit of your mind, this is Ephesians 4:22-24, and put on the new self. He's saying you need to realize that in Christ's death you died to the reign and rule of sin. Sin no longer has the right to reign over you. It lost its authority if you're in Christ. And you were raised in newness of life. You now have the power of the resurrection available to help you walk in holiness and you experience it as you believe these things.

In fact, back to chapter 1, he says this power is available to us who believe. It comes to us, salvation comes to us through faith and sanctification comes to us through faith. You grow in holiness as you believe God's truth. You start believing. This is the person who's mired in sin and overcome by a sin pattern, they start believing that they're not who they're...that what their life is like is not consistent with who they really are because you

believe God over your own senses. And the fact that you don't sense it doesn't mean it's not true, just like you can't hear the sound that the dog hears. You and I believe lies. If you are in Christ, you are free. You have been set free from sin. "I don't feel free." I don't care how you feel, the Bible says you are free and what we have to do is help each other believe that and day to day put to death sin and day to day reckon on the power of Christ, and we help one another day by day to put off sin and what happens over time is you start changing your thought patterns, those ingrained thought patterns start changing, the ingrained affections start changing, the ingrained habits start changing. As Christian ministers to Christian and reminds you of who you really are and you start believing who you really are and you start realizing, "This really is who I am. This sin that I thought was so much a part of me is not me at all. I've been lied to." And the power of Jesus' resurrection is my power. This is his provision. He gave him to us to be everything that you need to live out the Christian life. You have to just believe it and act on it.

Paul in Romans 6 says, "Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God through Jesus Christ." He works out that in verses 3 to 12 that to be a Christian is to be united to Jesus Christ. Everything that happened to him has happened to you. This is God's provision for your salvation. This is how God saves, he saves you from hell because everything that happened to Jesus now is applied to you. He took your sin out of the way, he gives you his righteousness. That really happens when you believe. Now how do you get sanctified? What happened to Jesus really happens for you. He died to the reign of sin, he only bore sin in his body but when he died, he died from the possibility of sin. It was impossible for him to sin. It's impossible for you to be under the reign of sin. He rose again with the power of righteousness and you have that power. So reckon yourselves dead to sin but alive to God through Jesus Christ.

And he says don't go on presenting your members as instruments of sin but present yourselves to God. You stop giving yourself to sin because it's not true of who you are, and you believe that and you stop doing it. You stop yelling and screaming because you don't allow your tongue to still be used by sin anymore. You bite your tongue and you look to the Lord and you start speaking blessing by the power of the Spirit. This is the way of the Christian life. Sanctification is just like salvation. It's all about believing in what Jesus has done and applying that to your life, and no matter how deep and how dirty and how mired you are, the resurrection of Jesus Christ says that if you trust in him, you will be free. Nothing can stop it.

Now you need other Christians, yes, and it's not going to happen instantly. God has chosen to make it so that we have to day by day die and rest in the finished work of Christ. Just the way he does it, it gives him more glory and I think the reason it is is because it helps us stay rooted in him relationally. If you could just take a magic pill and suddenly that sin pattern falls away, you would forget God but the fact that you have to cling to him every day because that sin is still there, it keeps you resting in him. The Lord has called us to experience the power of the resurrection in our daily lives. He wants us to be people who are really making progress building his kingdom. He wants to restore marriages. He wants to restore parent/child relationships. He wants to make us holy and there's nothing except our unbelief to stop us.

Let's go to the Lord in prayer.

*Our Father, we pray that You would help us, as Paul said, to truly know these things experientially and to work together to keep one another believing and trusting and resting in the finished work of our great Savior. Lord Jesus, we praise and honor You. You are King of kings and Lord of lords. You reign and rule forever. We pray that You would reign and rule more and more in our lives as we submit more and more to You in faith. In Jesus' name. Amen.*