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Sermon Notes

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The Power of God in Christ's Exaltation for the Church

Ephesians 1:19-23

In Ephesians 1, the Apostle Paul is deeply concerned that the Ephesian Christians know SPIRITUAL TRUTHS about themselves, now that they are Christians...

He is especially zealous that they be fully aware of the kind of POWER Almighty God has wielded in their lives and will continue to wield

To that end, He instructs them about the EXALTATION of Jesus Christ by God the Father... an exaltation so amazing it should take our breaths away:

Ephesians 1:19-23 That power is like the working of his mighty strength, ²⁰ which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, ²¹ far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. ²² And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, ²³ which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

I. Context: Paul's Prayer for the Ephesian Christians

A. Paul Prays for KNOWLEDGE

1. Above all... knowledge of God Himself

Ephesians 1:17 that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him

2. But beyond that, knowledge of three things

- a. Vs. 18: "what is the hope to which he has called you"

- b. Vs. 18: "what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints"

- c. Vs. 19: “what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe”

B. Focus: the Power of God on Display in Christ

Ephesians 1:19-21 the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might ²⁰ that he worked 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 above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come.

1. In other words, the SAME POWER of Almighty God that raised Jesus from the dead is at work in you and for you as Christians, guaranteeing your final salvation and glorification
2. Paul will complete this train of thought in the next chapter:

Ephesians 2:1-6 As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, ² in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. ³ All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath. ⁴ But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, ⁵ made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions-- it is by grace you have been saved. ⁶ And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus

- a. Simply put... just as Christ was PHYSICALLY DEAD, so you were SPIRITUALLY DEAD
- b. And just as Christ was RAISED FROM THE DEAD PHYSICALLY, so you also were raised from the dead SPIRITUALLY
- c. And just as Christ was exalted through the heavenly realms and seated at God’s right hand, so you were raised with Christ and seated with Him in the heavenly realms IN CHRIST JESUS
- d. The key to this is the concept of our spiritual union with Christ, which we’ll discuss more in the future messages

Romans 6:3-5 don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴ We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. ⁵ ¶ If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection.

3. Paul deeply yearns for God to confirm in the hearts of all Christians how astonishingly powerful God is to accomplish the final salvation of all the elect
4. He wants Christians to have full assurance of faith that

Philippians 1:6 he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

5. More than that, he wants us to understand the awesome power wielded by Jesus Christ right now on behalf of the church

C. God's Power only Discerned BY FAITH

1. Paul is really praying for the Holy Spirit to reveal the awesome invisible power of God to our hearts
2. This can only come by faith

Ephesians 1:17 I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better.

Ephesians 1:18 I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know

3. These invisible truths are revealed to our hearts by the WORD of GOD, which is the ministry of the Holy Spirit
4. The "eyes of the heart" is our FAITH... our ability to perceive invisible realities taught in the Word of God
5. The focus of all of this power is what God has already done in Jesus Christ
6. Paul seems to go step by step with Christ's exaltation as a clear display of the power of Almighty God
 - a. First, God raised Christ from the dead
 - b. Second, God ascended Christ through the heavenly realms to sit him at His right hand
 - c. Third: God subjected all powers, rulers, authorities to Christ
 - d. Fourth: God established Christ as Head over all things for the church

II. The First Display of God's Power: Christ Raised (vs. 19-20)

A. Christ's Resurrection from the Dead a Clear Demonstration of God's Power

KJV Ephesians 1:19-20 according to the working of his mighty power, ²⁰ Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead

1. This is the starting point for Paul's instruction about God's power in the Christian's life
2. The historical fact of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead was the foundation of the gospel they heard and believed
3. If God can raise Jesus from the dead physically, his power is sufficient for their complete salvation
4. God's power on display

Romans 1:4 [Jesus Christ our Lord was] declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead

B. Death an Awesomely Powerful Enemy

1. Death was an undefeated enemy... no one ever triumphed over the grave
2. Jesus died on the cross and was wrapped in linen cloths and laid in a cave belonging to Joseph of Arimathea
3. A huge stone was rolled in front of the entrance to the tomb and the people went away
4. He lay there, dead, cold, lifeless through the rest of that day and all the next day
 - a. His heart was still
 - b. His lungs did not fill with air
 - c. His muscles did not move
 - d. His brain was free from electrical activity
5. No power on earth could raise Jesus from the dead
 - a. No power of human skill or wisdom
 - b. No Greek physician could come and raise Jesus; no combination of potions or balms or ointments or therapeutic techniques could make the slightest difference
 - c. Death is an enemy FAR BEYOND human power

C. The Power of God in the Resurrection

1. But God the Father was already supernaturally protecting the body of Jesus FROM DECAY
2. Immediately upon death, the body's immune system ceases functioning; countless microbes ordinarily begin destroying the body in repulsive ways
3. One result of this DECAY is a "bad odor"

John 11:39 "Take away the stone," he said. "But, Lord," said Martha, the sister of the dead man, "by this time there is a bad odor, for he has been there four days."

4. But in Jesus' case, God the Father would not allow Jesus' dead body to decay

Psalm 16:10 you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay.

Acts 2:31 Seeing what was ahead, [David] spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to the grave, nor did his body see decay.

- a. God somehow protected the body of Jesus from the relentless destruction of these microbes
 - b. God's power was all over the body of Jesus in the tomb, preparing it for a glorious resurrection
5. Suddenly, on the third day, something astonishing happened to Jesus' body
 - a. It was miraculously transformed into an eternal mystery... a RESURRECTION BODY
 - b. He was not merely resuscitated like Lazarus or Jairus's 12-year-old daughter into the same MORTAL BODY
 - c. He was given the first resurrection body in redemptive history... a body completely free from pain and death

Romans 6:9 For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him.

- d. Jesus sat up in the tomb and probably passed right through the linen wrappings with their sticky aromatic resins; he took the head cloth off and folded it up by itself and set it aside
- e. Just as he passed through the grave cloths, so he also passed through the walls of the tomb and went out
- f. A supernatural display of the power of God... God the Father has all power over death... and death is no hindrance to Him at all

D. Paul's Point: The Same Power that Raised Christ from the Dead Physically Has ALREADY Been At Work in Your Life

1. You were dead spiritually in Satan's dark kingdom; enslaved to passions and lusts, serving the flesh, unable to stop sinning
2. You were dead to God, dead to His word, dead to His laws
3. But God worked in you with an awesome power LIKE WHAT HE DID to Jesus' body... that He did to your soul!
4. But God wasn't done exalting Jesus Christ!

III. The Second Display of God's Power: Christ Seated (vs. 20-21)

Ephesians 1:19-21 according to the working of his mighty power, ²⁰ Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, ²¹ Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come

God also put His awesome power on display by what happened to Christ after His resurrection from the dead

The Resurrection from the dead proclaims "Christ lives, and He lives FOREVER"

The Exaltation of Christ to the highest place in the universe proclaims "Christ reigns, and He reigns FOREVER"

A. The Ascension of Christ

1. After Jesus was raised from the dead, He spent forty days with his disciples and instructed them about Old Testament prophecies that had been fulfilled in Him and about the Kingdom of God
2. After that time:

Acts 1:9 After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight.

3. This was not the end of His journey, however

Hebrews 4:14 Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God

- a. Jesus' infinite journey goes beyond heaven, because God lives ABOVE the heavens

Psalm 8:1 O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens.

Psalm 57:5 Be exalted, O God, above the heavens; let your glory be over all the earth.

- b. Jesus goes ABOVE ALL CREATED REALMS right to the throne of God itself to save us from our sins

Hebrews 7:26 Such a high priest meets our need-- one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens.

There our Great High Priest has offered His own blood for us... right before the throne of Almighty God

Christ is INFINITELY ABOVE all powers in the heavenly realms... as is appropriate given his status as the only begotten Son of God

B. The Session of Christ

1. God gave Jesus Christ the highest place of honor in the universe... seated at His right hand
 - a. The “right hand” is a place of access to God unlike anyone else
 - b. The “right hand” is a place of influence, from which Jesus can carry out His intercessory ministry
2. To “SIT” in God’s presence is a picture of equality with God
 - a. Angels stand to serve or fall on their faces in reverence
 - b. So also human beings
 - c. But Jesus sits at God’s right hand as an equal
 - d. ALSO... Jesus’ sitting is a picture of the completion of His work as mediator and High Priest

Hebrews 10:11-14 Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. ¹² But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God. ¹³ Since that time he waits for his enemies to be made his footstool, ¹⁴ because by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.

3. Predicted

Psalm 110:1-2 The LORD says to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet." ² The LORD will extend your mighty scepter from Zion; you will rule in the midst of your enemies.

4. Asserted

Ephesians 1:20 he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms

Colossians 3:1 Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God.

Hebrews 1:3 After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.

Hebrews 8:1 We do have such a high priest, who sat down at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven

C. The Seating of Christ at God's Right Hand is a Display of God's Power

1. Christ was a dead man in the tomb
2. God by His power raised Him from the dead and exalted him to the highest place

Philippians 2:9-11 Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

D. Implications for Us

1. Christ is our Savior, our Head, our Brother... and by faith we are united to Him spiritually
2. His exaltation is our exaltation
3. So Paul specifically asserts

Ephesians 2:6 [God] raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus...

4. What level of confidence and joy this should give us!
5. Even more when we realize the WARLIKE implications of God the Father's command to His Son

Psalm 110:1-2 The LORD says to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet." ² The LORD will extend your mighty scepter from Zion; you will rule in the midst of your enemies.

Christ is seated at God's right hand while Almighty God Himself, God the Father, employs His omnipotence – the totality of His wisdom and power – to crush Jesus' enemies under His feet!

IV. The Third Display of God's Power: Christ Ruling (vs. 21)

Ephesians 1:20-22 seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, ²¹ far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. ²² And he put all things under his feet

A. "Rule and Authority and Power and Dominion"

1. God created many orders of beings, both physical and spiritual
2. These are names of all of these orders of beings... especially in the spiritual realms; we generally simply speak of ANGELS... but the organization and variety of spirit-beings is wider than that
 - a. The word "archangel" is given to Michael in Jude 9; it means "ruler-angel"
 - b. It implies some angels are more powerful than others and have positions of authority
 - c. Isaiah speaks of "seraphim" = "burning ones"... not mentioned anywhere else in the Bible
 - d. The Book of Revelation speaks of "four living creatures" with six wings, covered with eyes all around; one like a lion, one like an ox; one with the face of a man; one like a flying eagle; they were covered with eyes all around
 - e. The Book of Ezekiel also describes creatures like that, but slightly different
3. The idea of an "archangel" (like Michael) gives a sense of dominions, or realms of angelic power... perhaps God put various angels in charge of various aspects of His creation
 - a. In the Book of Daniel, an angel tells Daniel that Michael is "one of the chief princes" who came to assist another angel in his struggle against the "King of Persia"

- b. Since no human could ever successfully resist an angel, most commentators surmise that the “King of Persia” refers either to Satan or to a powerful demon under Satan’s rule

4. Paul will use these same terms later to refer to Satan and his demons

Ephesians 6:12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

- 5. This would suggest different orders of demonic forces... different realms of jurisdiction... different levels of power...
 - a. Angels have stunning levels of power, far beyond our ability to comprehend
 - b. Perhaps the clearest glimpse into the supernatural world, the world of angels and demons is in the Book of Daniel

Daniel 10:4-8 On the twenty-fourth day of the first month, as I was standing on the bank of the great river, the Tigris, ⁵ I looked up and there before me was a man dressed in linen, with a belt of the finest gold around his waist. ⁶ His body was like chrysolite, his face like lightning, his eyes like flaming torches, his arms and legs like the gleam of burnished bronze, and his voice like the sound of a multitude. ⁷ I, Daniel, was the only one who saw the vision; the men with me did not see it, but such terror overwhelmed them that they fled and hid themselves. ⁸ So I was left alone, gazing at this great vision; I had no strength left, my face turned deathly pale and I was helpless.

- c. So, this astonishingly glorious and powerful being, this mighty warrior angel is the very one who was unable to get past the “King of Persia”

Daniel 10:13 the prince of the Persian kingdom resisted me twenty-one days. Then Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, because I was detained there with the king of Persia.

- d. Satan rules over an organized, dark Kingdom with many fallen angels of stunning power
- e. It could be that various demons are assigned to rule over various nations on earth and influence their decisions
- f. It could also be that various demons impersonate deities and stand behind the idols that pagans worship

1 Corinthians 10:20 the sacrifices of pagans are offered to demons, not to God, and I do not want you to be participants with demons.

g. At any rate, Satan's vast kingdom of wickedness is well-organized and invisible... led by "rulers, authorities, and powers of this present darkness, and spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms."

6. Ephesians 1:20-22: Christ established in authority over all of them!!!

- a. All of the forces of angels and demons alike is as nothing compared to Christ, enthroned at the right hand of Almighty God
- b. So also Christ rules over earthly powers as well... CHRIST IS ABOVE ALL EARTHLY POWERS
- c. No human ruler even comes close to Jesus in power and authority
- d. Even the most powerful dictator and emperor and king and President and Prime Minister... they are as NOTHING compared to Christ

Isaiah 40:15 Surely the nations are like a drop in a bucket; they are regarded as dust on the scales; he weighs the islands as though they were fine dust.

Isaiah 40:22-24 He sits enthroned above the circle of the earth, and its people are like grasshoppers. He stretches out the heavens like a canopy, and spreads them out like a tent to live in. ²³ He brings princes to naught and reduces the rulers of this world to nothing. ²⁴ No sooner are they planted, no sooner are they sown, no sooner do they take root in the ground, than he blows on them and they wither, and a whirlwind sweeps them away like chaff.

All the political power of earth is under the sway of the Evil One

1 John 5:19 ¶ We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.

2 Corinthians 4:4 The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

Satan's powerful demons exert a direct influence on the "movers and shakers" of planet earth; the princes and kings and CEOs and kingmakers and behind-the-scenes operatives are mere PUPPETS in Satan's hand... and He moves them directly to ATTACK THE CHURCH and RESIST it

Christ is infinitely ABOVE them...

Ephesians 1:21 far above all rule and authority and power and dominion

The gap between Christ and the most powerful created being (Satan) is infinite!!

Thus rightly did He say,

Matthew 28:18 “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me...”

B. “Every Name that is Named”

1. Paul says God seated Christ far above every name that is named

Philippians 2:9-11 *Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name,¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

2. This refers to fame, glory, reputation, and power

2 Samuel 7:9 *Now I will make your name great, like the names of the greatest men of the earth.*

- a. Name also refers to AUTHORITY... such as “by what name do you command me?”
- b. Police might shout to a fleeing criminal: “Stop in the name of the Law!!”
- c. After healing a famous cripple in the Temple, the Jewish authorities asked Peter and John:

Acts 4:7 *“By what power or what name did you do this?”*

3. Jesus is given a name infinitely above all other names... a name greater than that of military conquerors like Alexander the Great and Julius Caesar; a name greater than the most powerful emperors like Kublai Khan or Suleymon the Magnificent; a name greater than the wisest philosophers or scholars like Plato, Archimedes, or Einstein
4. Jesus is given a name far above all heavenly names, like Gabriel or Michael, these mighty angels
5. Jesus’ name is FAR ABOVE all other names

C. “Not Only in This Age, But Also in the One to Come”

1. Christ’s power is BOTH present AND eternal
2. It will extend forever and ever

Isaiah 9:7 *Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this.*

[Nebuchadnezzar] *Daniel 4:34-35 His dominion is an eternal dominion; his kingdom endures from generation to generation. ³⁵ All the peoples of the earth are regarded as nothing. He does as he pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth. No one can hold back his hand or say to him: "What have you done?"*

[Gabriel to Mary] *Luke 1:32-33 He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, ³³ and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end."*

D. All Things Under His Feet: Total Domination Over His Enemies

Ephesians 1:22 And God placed all things under his feet

1. Paul cites Psalm 110 specifically in stating that Christ's enemies will all be put under His feet

Psalm 110:1-2 "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet." ² The LORD will extend your mighty scepter from Zion; you will rule in the midst of your enemies.

2. God has given all power and authority to Jesus to completely subdue His enemies
 - a. He binds the strong man (Satan) and plunders his dark Kingdom EVERY SINGLE DAY of His chosen children, and there is nothing Satan can do to stop it
 - b. He topples realms and subdues Kings and brings justice and vindication to His servants who cry out to Him day and night
 - c. He drives out demons from their strongholds, and shines light in dark places whenever He chooses to
3. In this way, Christ is able to build His Kingdom with awesome and irresistible power

Matthew 16:18 "I will build my church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it!"

4. Christ actively controls daily life on planet earth by His sovereign power
 - a. Christ constantly UPHOLDS the universe by the word of His power (Hebrews 1:3)

Illus. Picture the world like a great house in an earthquake, about to be destroyed; the structural pillars are crumbling and the whole structure is about to come down on the people; picture a mighty man (stronger than

Samson) rushing in and standing at just the right place, holding up the ceiling beams by his astonishing strength and allowing the rescue workers enough time to rush in and pull the children from the house; so Christ SUSTAINS the world moment by moment, though it is groaning and decaying and dying and crumbling at every moment. He sustains it by the word of His power until all His elect, His children, have been rescued

- b. Christ PERMITS his powerful enemies to continue to exist and to act in the rebellious way they do; he PERMITS them to attack His people, He PERMITS them to make unjust laws and to martyr them and oppose their message; he PERMITS them to fleece the people, to strip them bare and plunder them...He permits all this wickedness because it is ultimately part of his sovereign plan; just as it was in the case of His own death:

Acts 4:27-28 *Indeed Herod and Pontius Pilate met together with the Gentiles and the people of Israel in this city to conspire against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed. ²⁸ They did what your power and will had decided beforehand should happen.*

- c. Christ RESTRAINS wicked creatures—both devils and men—from doing much of the evil they would want. They make evil plans, but the Lord overrules them for His own glory

Isaiah 7:7 *Yet this is what the Sovereign LORD says: "It will not take place, it will not happen..."*

- d. Christ LIMITS wicked enemies from doing the extent of the evil they would want; he assigns them their boundaries and their walls and their borders and they cannot transgress without His sovereign permission

[to the suffering church of Smyrna] ***Revelation 2:10*** *Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days.*

See... the suffering is clearly LIMITED! Satan wanted to KILL them, instead all he can do is imprison them; the enemies would want to keep them in prison for years; instead, they must be released after ten days!

So all the temptations and assaults of the enemies are FILTERED!! Satan cannot get at God's people without permission:

[Satan said to God about Job] ***Job 1:10*** *"Have you not put a hedge around him and his household and everything he has?"*

1 Corinthians 10:13 *"God is faithful and will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you can bear..."*

e. Christ PROTECTS His people in the midst of terrifying enemies

Matthew 10:16 I am sending you out like sheep among wolves.

The night Jesus was arrested, the enemies of God would love to have arrested ALL TWELVE of the apostles; Jesus was in complete control of His arrest and protected them from facing a temptation too strong for them:

John 18:4-9 Jesus, knowing all that was going to happen to him, went out and asked them, "Who is it you want?"⁵ "Jesus of Nazareth," they replied. "I am he," Jesus said. (And Judas the traitor was standing there with them.)⁶ When Jesus said, "I am he," they drew back and fell to the ground.⁷ Again he asked them, "Who is it you want?" And they said, "Jesus of Nazareth."⁸ "I told you that I am he," Jesus answered. "If you are looking for me, then let these men go."⁹ This happened so that the words he had spoken would be fulfilled: "I have not lost one of those you gave me."

f. Christ PUNISHES evildoers and repays in His own good time the evil they have done; it comes back onto them, and He controls even the circumstances of their death for the protection of His people

King Herod killed the Apostle James and would have killed Peter, except that the Lord orchestrated Peter's miraculous escape. But Christ's wrath was not sleeping. Soon after that, King Herod, wearing golden robes, made a speech to an adoring crowd, who worshipped him like a god:

Acts 12:23 Immediately, because Herod did not give praise to God, an angel of the Lord struck him down, and he was eaten by worms and died.

In the fourth century, the Roman Emperor Julian the Apostate persecuted the church and sought to weaken it; but he was thwarted again and again by providence; he sought to fund the rebuilding of the Jewish temple in Jerusalem to the chagrin of Christians and in direct contradiction of Jesus' prophecy that not one stone from the Temple would remain; but the project met with failure from repeated natural disasters: fires and earthquakes. Then Julian decided to destroy his two enemies – the Persians and the Christians. But he decided to do it in that order – Persian first, then the Christians. He died fighting the Persians and never got around to destroying the Christians

g. Christ REWARDS by providence acts of kindness shown to His people; he blesses the rule of kings and presidents that seek to help Christianity...

In all these ways, Christ ACTIVELY RULES OVER THE EVENTS of earth

E. Christ's Absolute Authority is Seen Most Plainly in His Role on Judgment Day

John 5:22-23 Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son, ²³ that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father.

John 5:27 And he has given him authority to judge because he is the Son of Man.

Matthew 25:31-33 "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. ³² All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. ³³ He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

F. The Final Consummation of Christ's Victory Over His Enemies

1 Corinthians 15:24-27 Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. ²⁵ For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. ²⁶ The last enemy to be destroyed is death. ²⁷ For he "has put everything under his feet."

1 Corinthians 15:28 When he has done this, then the Son himself will be made subject to him who put everything under him, so that God may be all in all.

Ephesians 1:10 to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ.

V. The Purpose of God's Power: Christ Head for the Church (vs. 22-23)

Ephesians 1:22-23 And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, ²³ which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

A. Key Insight: Christ's Power is Wielded FOR THE GOOD OF HIS CHURCH

1. All of the awesome power that Paul has been describing here is not merely to be an encouragement to the church of what God can do
2. TRUE: Paul uses God's exaltation of Jesus Christ from the dead to His right hand far above all rulers and authorities as a CLEAR EXAMPLE of the same power God is working in each of us
3. BUT Christ's establishment as King of kings and Lord of lords is no mere HONORARY POSITION; Christ is no mere FIGUREHEAD!! Not at all! Christ actively rules every moment of every day FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE CHURCH

B. Christ Established as Head of the Church

1. The church is the assembly of the saints, both living and dead, those who are one with Him by faith

2. The words “Head” and “Body” are metaphors for the spiritual union between Christ and every single individual believer
3. This union is so complete and powerful that Jesus spoke this way to Saul of Tarsus, who was breathing out murderous threats against the Lord’s disciples and was dragging them off, both men and women, and putting them in prison:

Acts 9:4-5 "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" ⁵ "Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked. "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," he replied.

4. In the same way, Jesus will say this to all mankind on Judgment Day

Matthew 25:40 "The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.'

5. If something is hurting the foot, the head is not unconcerned... for the pain signals go back to the Head, and it is the Head that moves to work relief for the foot

C. Head = Absolute Authority Over

1. Christ alone rules over the church
2. BUT the manner of Christ’s rule over the Church is very different from His rule over the powers, principalities and evil rulers; He rules over them by force and by hidden providence
3. He rules over the church by loving persuasion through the Holy Spirit
4. We DELIGHT to do Christ’s will, and are GRIEVED when we disobey
5. Also, no human is the ruler or head of the church
 - a. No pope, no founding church-planter, no elder or group of elders
 - b. Christ’s rule over the church is absolute... He alone is HEAD OVER EVERYTHING for the church

D. The Church is Christ’s “Fullness”... Despite the Fact that He Fills Everything in Every way

1. Christ didn’t need the church in order to be full... we actually receive HIS FULLNESS through the Holy Spirit

John 1:16 And from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace.

Ephesians 5:18 be filled with the Spirit.

2. But we understand this statement in this way: the church is the FULLNESS of Christ in that it was for the church Christ was born, for the church that Christ lived, for the church that Christ died and for the church that he rose
3. God the Father entrusted the Elect to Christ and sent Him to save them; He returns to heaven having ACHIEVED HIS MISSION

Hebrews 2:13-15 And again he says, "Here am I, and the children God has given me." ¹⁴ ¶ Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death-- that is, the devil-- ¹⁵ and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.

4. We are the chosen ones, the children God sent Christ into the world to save; He did not come back EMPTY-HANDED! We are His fullness, and He is ours
5. Also, the fullness means that 100% of the elect will be saved

John 6:37-39 All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away. ³⁸ For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me. ³⁹ And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all that he has given me, but raise them up at the last day.

VI. Applications

- A. Christians: Marvel at this Awesome Display of POWER by God the Father in Christ
 1. The same power that raised Christ from the dead and exalted Him to the highest place is AT WORK IN YOU NOW... it has already been at work in you and will continue to work in you and around you until you are in your resurrection body in the New Heaven and New Earth
 2. Be fully CONFIDENT, no matter how difficult the road seems to be
 3. Meditate on Christ's resurrection every day: marvel at how God raised Him from the dead physically and how he raised you from the dead spiritually; meditate on the fact that, someday, He will raise your body from the dead as well
 4. Meditate on God's power in exalting Christ through the heavens to sit at His right hand; understand what that means for you... you have an ADVOCATE at the right hand of God who is CONSTANTLY interceding for you; your advocate is SEATED, meaning His atoning work is done;
 5. Meditate on Christ's absolute authority and power, INFINITELY FAR ABOVE all rule and authority, power and dominion; don't fear what Satan

can do to you; don't fear what man can do to you; Christ is actively ruling from His omnipotent throne to control all events for the blessing of His church

6. Delight in that control... REST IN IT... be not afraid!! Make progress in sanctification! Make progress in evangelism
 7. Meditate on Christ's power over all Satanic forces... demonic forces... understand that Christ could completely destroy them all in an instant if He chose
 8. Meditate also on how Christ filters your temptations and will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you can bear
 9. FIGHT TEMPTATION powerfully by the Spirit! Put on the full armor of God! Realize you do have a struggle—but it's not against flesh and blood but against Satan's dark forces... but you will prevail in the power and might of the Lord
- B. Non-Christians: COME TO CHRIST! Hear him calling to you to repent and follow Him; He is a mighty King! He died on the cross for sinners like you and me! Trust in Him now, while there's still time