

He Raised Him... and Raised Us Up with Him

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[0 : 00] We'll be skipping, as I say, between chapter 1 and 2, so that will help as we go on. But let's pray for us, for God's help as we do that. Our Father, we thank you for the glorious truths of the gospel.

These things are of first importance. And so we pray now, by your Spirit, help us to give these things of first importance our first attention. Help us, we pray, not to be distracted, even by legitimate things, but lesser things.

Fix our eyes, we pray, upon Jesus Christ, raised from the dead. And encourage our hearts as we put our trust in him, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Well, on Wednesday at Life Group, if you were there, or maybe at prayer meeting the week before, we started our Passion for Life series. And if you were there, you would have spent a bit of time in the first half of chapter 1 of Ephesians.

And this morning, we're just picking straight up from the bit after that. That actually wasn't planned at all. It just happened. But, if you were at those studies, and you spent a bit of time in Ephesians chapter 1, you'll know that it was planned, just not by people.

[1 : 26] Because what we see right at the start of this letter is that God has had a plan for his people from before the beginning of time, which he has been working out all through history.

It's the plan he's unfolding, even as we sit here this morning. And his whole plan revolves around one person, Jesus Christ.

In fact, he says here in this letter, chapter 1, verse 10, here's God's plan in a nutshell. His purpose, that he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time.

What is it? To unite all things in him. Things in heaven, and things on earth. You don't need me to tell you that that plan is not finished yet.

Everything is not yet back the way it should be. Any hope of us finding a human solution to our great problems surely has been crushed over the last few years with the sight of tanks rolling across Europe, bombs dropping in the Middle East.

[2 : 33] So much more that we see on our screens. We're politically divided. We're socially fragmented. We're spiritually lost. We read about a mental health epidemic among young people.

So many are unable to face life because they look at the future and see so little to hope for and so much to dread. And we wonder, don't we, where is it all going?

Who's going to get it there? Am I going to make it? Friends, this Easter Sunday morning, the Bible tells us that history is heading for the whole of creation being brought back together.

Divisions healed. Brokenness fixed. Tears wiped away. Sin dealt with in God's Son, Jesus. That's been God's plan for eternity.

And Paul very much wants us, both as a church and whoever we are as we come this morning, to be part of it. 2,000 years ago, Jesus Christ rose from the dead.

[3 : 45] And Paul tells us this morning that that changes everything. Everything for us now and forever. However, if you believe this morning, you're a Christian here, Paul very simply wants you to grasp more deeply the overwhelming implications of that truth.

So that you walk every day in the light of Jesus' resurrection. If you don't yet believe, let me put it to you like this. Life can't carry on as it is now after you have heard about this.

The question is, what are you going to do with it? Even if you don't think it happened? Well, the consequences are so big. Isn't it worth finding out? Did it happen? What could it mean?

Could this save me? Could it change my life? Paul prays in our passage, and this is my prayer for us this morning. I invite you to make it your prayer.

That we today might know and grasp two main things which are on your sheet. The first thing is, in a world torn apart by sin, Paul says, I pray that you might know the great power by which God raised Christ from the dead.

[5 : 05] Please, God and Father, our Lord Jesus Christ, give us, we pray, a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of yourself.

Having the eyes of our hearts enlightened, that we might know what is the hope to which you've called us. What are the riches of your glorious inheritance in us?

And what is the immeasurable greatness of your power towards us who believe, according to the working of your great might, that you worked in Christ when you raised him from the dead?

That's Paul's prayer. That's our prayer, isn't it? Now, I reckon between us, if we pulled all our knowledge in this room, it would fill quite a few big books. And I would want a copy of that.

Okay, you're a clever bunch of people. However, I hope we can see that what Paul prays that this church would know isn't really in the same league as the kind of stuff that we need to know for our job or the stuff that we learn at school.

[6 : 09] Please know, he says, the hope to which God has called you. So easy, isn't it, to say, yeah, I learned about that at camp. Like, they gave a talk about heaven or the new creation or something, and I kind of got it then, like it was quite easy.

The riches of God's glorious inheritance in the saints. Yeah, there's a glorious future for us. I get it. The immeasurable greatness of his power towards us who believe, according to his great might that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead.

The resurrection. Paul, that's bread and butter. Why are you praying that we would know that? Right? It's all up here. I've got it all filed away. I get it.

It's stored in between my stash of weeknight recipes and the stuff that I don't want people to know about me at church. No, listen, he says.

Verse 16. I do not cease to give thanks to you, remembering you in my prayers, 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, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you might know.

[7 : 22] There's knowing, and there's knowing. Not only up here in our heads, he says, but here in our hearts.

Paul's praying that not only the eyes of our faces might be kept open, though that is a good prayer on a Sunday, not even the eyes of our minds, but the eyes of our hearts might be opened, that we might see and know these things, not in a superficial way or a way that we can easily forget, but in a deep, personal, and life-changing way.

His prayer isn't that we would learn something new this morning. We know that because he's writing to Christians. He's heard of their faith in the Lord Jesus and their love for his people. No, his prayer is that we would be changed by what we know.

Lord, please open the eyes of our hearts today that we'd know in here what we know up here, and so be transformed in our lives out here by that knowledge.

So what does he want us to know? Well, a few things, but one main thing that we'll get to, and he gives most of his time to, he says, firstly, I pray that you'd know the hope to which he's called you.

[8 : 32] It suggests, doesn't it, that maybe hope might be a struggle for these Christians in a way that faith and love perhaps weren't so much. The sort of future dimension or orientation of their Christian lives is something these believers needed prayer to properly hold onto and rest in in their hearts.

And I reckon we can sympathize with them in that. Life then wasn't any less dark and chaotic than it is now.

I don't know if it's worse now, but certainly we see more of that on our screens, don't we? What do we have to look forward to if we're in Christ? Well, he prays that they would know the hope to which he's called them, and he's told them what that is a few verses before, that all things in heaven and on earth, being united, brought together, in and under Jesus as the one true reigning king.

What a wonderful hope for the future we have if our trust is in Christ. Father, open the eyes of our hearts today to truly know and grasp the hope to which you've called us.

He also says that we'd know what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints. Now, he's talked about our inheritance back in verse 14.

[9 : 56] If we're in Christ, we will inherit all that belongs to God the Father with his Son. But if that wasn't enough to think about, he now talks about his inheritance in us.

Do you notice that? His glorious inheritance in the saints. If I'm ever at a conference, I usually pick up a couple of books to bring home and read to the kids.

At the MTA book in a day a couple of weeks ago, I got a book about John Knox. It said he'd grown up in a Christian home, he became a priest, he knew it all. But then he read this in John's Gospel. For on the night before he died, Jesus prays, Father, I desire that they also whom you've given me may be with me where I am to see my glory that you've given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.

And that for him was a penny-dropping moment that Jesus wanted his people with him to see his risen glory, and he prayed for that to happen.

[11 : 12] It wasn't that we have to do our best to convince Jesus to let us into heaven, but that Jesus had already prepared a place for him in heaven because he was part of Christ's own inheritance, a people he'd saved for himself, been given by the Father.

The eyes of his heart were opened to know then what are the riches of Christ's glorious inheritance in the saints, in his people.

That sense of being so valued and wanted by Christ, not for anything in ourselves, but because he has loved us from before the foundation of the world.

It made this man a Christian. He believed in the Lord Jesus, and he was saved. Surely our prayer this morning is, Father, open the eyes of our hearts like that to truly know and grasp the riches of your glorious inheritance in us, your people.

But the main thing Paul prays for this church to know is from verse 19 onwards, where he says, what is the immeasurable greatness of his power towards us who believe, according to the working of his great might that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead?

[12 : 37] How much power and might do you think it takes to raise someone from the dead? Out there, I had a look, I checked, okay, and it is there, to be assured.

There's a defibrillator. And helpfully, underneath that, for those of us who don't know what that is, it says heart restarter, helpfully. I had a little look, you know, how powerful is that machine?

And it turns out the answer's really complicated. Okay, someone please explain it to me after. But, apparently, the average defibrillator stores somewhere between 1,000 and 5,000 volts of electricity. It turns out that making someone alive is a big job. The Guinness World Record holder for the longest heart attack that somebody fully recovered from is a mountain climber, known only as Roberto, He got stuck on a mountain in freezing temperatures.

Once he was rescued, he was given CPR and shocks to his heart, but he had to be taken to hospital, put on life support, until his body had warmed up enough for them to give him one last great big shock, at which point his heart started beating again after eight hours and 42 minutes.

[14 : 02] And apparently he left hospital with only mild memory loss. Needless to say, most people whose hearts stop beating don't last that long.

And also, we know that every heart will one day stop beating and not start again. Jesus was crucified on a Friday afternoon.

The Gospels tell us he died about three o'clock. We know that before six o'clock, his body was taken down from the cross and given to one of his followers.

He wrapped it in cloths and laid it in a tomb. At dawn on the Sunday morning, some women went back and found the tomb empty, but as they walked away, who was standing there to greet them? But Jesus himself. I don't know exactly how many hours Jesus was dead, but it was a lot longer than eight or nine. What's more, his heart had not simply stopped, but his body had been brutalized.

[15 : 08] The way that he died would have caused irreparable damage to his lungs, his heart, his other internal organs. He wasn't given CPR. There were no defibrillators.

His body was just wrapped up and left for two nights in what was little more than a cave. Yet on the third day, Friday, Saturday, Sunday, God raised him from the dead.

Not only with no side effects, but with a body fit for the new creation, a real human body that could eat food, be touched, speak, be seen, but free from sickness, pain, tiredness, even ordinary physical limitations.

He walked into rooms that were locked. Not only that, but he didn't die again. Again, Roberto's heart, wherever he is now, will one day stop beating and will not be restarted.

Jesus, now he is resurrected from the dead. His heart will never stop beating again. It beats now. He rose from the dead, never to die again. Death has no dominion over him.

[16:24] We have to ask, don't we? We have to ask, what power is there that could do that? No amount of voltage is enough to restart someone's heart so that it never stops.

Only God's divine, supernatural power can do that. Or in Paul's words, the immeasurable greatness of his power and the working of his great might.

Jesus' resurrection could only be accomplished by God's own power. But there's more. Verse 21, God raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in heavenly places.

And listen to how vast and immense his resurrection power is now, 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.

And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church.

[17:38] It's a lot of ands. As a man named Abraham Piper famously said, there is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over Christ, who is sovereign over all, does not cry, mine.

I don't know how hard you have to try just to get on top of your life. I have to try quite hard. How would you love to have full control even for a day over all the things that you're responsible for? We strive for that, don't we? And how often do we actually achieve that? Think then of the power that it takes to raise a dead man to life and then put him in control of every single thing, not only in the universe, also in the spiritual realm, power beyond what we could imagine or conceive.

Friends, Paul says the greatness of God's power in raising Jesus from the dead and seating him in glory is immeasurable power, off the scale, can't be quantified, infinite power.

And what he prays that we will know is that that is the measure of his power towards us who believe. Back from the dead, resurrection power, seating Jesus on the throne of heaven, power, that is the power source, if you like, that we are plugged into permanently when we believe in the Lord Jesus.

[19:25] Back from the dead. Do you know that? I know you know that. But do you know that?

You woke up this morning and that is the power that is at work in your life towards you. It's a remarkable thing that he says in verse 22 that God in his power gave Jesus as Lord of all to the church.

That as we sit here this morning, verse 23, he who fills all in all specially fills his people. Think of it like this, that he whose kingdom is the entire cosmos, galaxies, oceans, deserts, mountains, the stars, the moons, the planets, makes his home in us.

Friends, Jesus' resurrection changes everything, everything. Do you know that? But you say, you know, how do I plug into that power?

It's great that it's there. Jesus is raised from the dead. But how does God's resurrection power, that immeasurable, great, mighty power, connect with my life? Well, that's where Paul goes now in our second big thing that we would know, it's a shorter point, the great love in which God has raised us with Christ.

[20:56] Christ. How does this connect with us? Now, chapter 2, verse 1 might feel like a crash back down to earth after such glorious truths, but his point there is very simply that once, whoever we are, and for some of us maybe even still now today, we were not raised from the dead like Christ.

We were under another power, not Christ's power, and the power that was at work in us was unlike Christ. Just have a look to verse 1, and you, right, this is getting much more personal now, isn't it? You were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that's now at work in the sons of disobedience.

Those are strong words, especially if you're here for the first time, you're not a Christian, but if we unpack them, none of us can actually argue with them. He's saying once, our whole lives were basically about following the crowd, the course of this world, following our own hearts, the desires of our body and mind, and walking away from God, following in the footsteps of the spirit who specializes in disobedience.

Perhaps this morning you think, I'm not that bad. I'm obviously quite a nice person. I'm sure you are. That might be true in the horizontal sense, okay? As my dad used to say as he bombed down the

motorway on the way to our beach holiday every summer, I'm just keeping up with the traffic. [22 : 35] That is to say, I might be going a bit fast, but everyone else is as well, so, you know, that's okay. Without commenting on speed limits, that's a little window, isn't it, into how we all naturally go through life.

That's our autopilot, keeping up with the traffic, going with the crowd, doing what everyone around us approves of and is doing as well. And we think, as long as we don't hurt anyone, well, who cares how we live?

But that only works if we don't look up. It works on a horizontal level, but not if there's a vertical level as well to life.

If there's a God who is real and has told us what is good and right and true and we ignore him and walk away from him and disobey him, that's a problem.

Keeping up with the traffic only works if no one's going to get a fine, but what if, after they've kept up with the traffic, everyone on the motorway that day gets a scary looking letter on their doorstep when they get home.

[23 : 41] Penalty charges for breaking the law. Paul says here, that is our problem, that there is an authority over us and that simply knocking a few miles an hour off our speed isn't going to save us.

We can't help ourselves. We were children of wrath like the rest of mankind. We try to do better, but our autopilot kicks in and we continue to sin and offend God. Though the solution, he says, for being dead in sins under a rebel power and subject to his work is chapter 1, verse 19 and 20.

To look up to God, take hold in our hearts of what? The immeasurable greatness of his power towards us who believe according to the working of his great might that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead.

He's saying, friends, if you're not a Christian here today, it takes nothing short of that power for you to really change. Just like everyone else here.

Just like every Christian around the world today. Okay, we celebrate the resurrection not because it's a nice thing to do or because it's a good tradition or because our family does it, but because the resurrection is what saves us from being dead in sin before God.

[25 : 01] Now, how can it do that? How do I plug into that power then? What right do I have, you could ask, to benefit from a miracle that happened 2,000 years ago to the Son of God?

Well, listen, just listen, take this in. Drink this in. 2, verse 4. How does God make this personal for you? But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ.

By grace, you've been saved and raised us up with him and seated us with him in heavenly places in Christ Jesus so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace and kindness towards us in Christ Jesus.

What right do we have to be raised from our spiritual death? None at all. But God does raise us because of the great love with which he loved us.

If you've been a Christian any length of time, you will have asked yourself, does God really love me? How do I know if God really loves me?

[26 : 23] How often we ask that, don't we, when things are not going well? Does God really love me? I don't feel very loved. If he really loved me, would he not change this stuff and sort this out and fix the stuff that I'm suffering through and struggling with?

But Paul says, this is how we know God loves us. He saw us lying dead. Dead, dead, not just by accident, but dead because we deserved to be dead in our own sins.

Dead, dead. And as he looked on us dead in our sins, he loved us with such a great love that he took our lifeless being and joined us with his own son who had never deserved to die so that through his resurrection, we could be made alive with him and raised up with him and if you can even take this in, seated with him in heavenly places.

Where are you sitting now? If your trust is in Jesus, you are sitting now in heavenly places before the throne of God. That's where your life is.

And why did he do that, verse 7? So that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace and kindness towards us. He raised us so that he could lavish his infinite love and kindness on us forever.

[27 : 53] Remember John Knox's realization. He wants us to be with him in heaven. Not for his own blessing, but for our blessing to show us that he loves us for eternity, without end.

So how then can I have that, be joined with Christ, share his resurrection today? How can I plug into that power? Paul tells us, mercy, for by grace you have been saved through faith.

Faith. He said the same thing back in 115. Who can he say this is all true of? Because I've heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus. Faith. Simple trust in Jesus and what he's done for you.

Faith that he did it all for you. That he died for your sins. That he rose from the dead that you might live forever with him.

That he prayed for you on the night before he died that you would be with him to see his glory because the Father had loved him from before the foundation of the world.

[29 : 02] If that is you today, brothers and sisters, know, know, know, that as surely as Christ was raised from the dead, God loves you with an undying, unconditional, eternal, and unchanging love.

And he has done everything needed to save you forever to be with him. his resurrection is yours today, both now and on the last day because he has loved you and given himself for you, died and risen again if you have trusted in him.

And if you have not yet done that, rested your faith in Christ, friends, that is how simple it is to know his great power and love towards us as people. That is how we're saved from our sin and our spiritual and eternal death that our sins deserve.

We cannot be made alive in our hearts or on the last day apart from Jesus' resurrection. We must trust in him.

You must be united with him in his resurrection. Rest the whole weight of our lives upon him and what he's done for us. Would you do that today? Easter Sunday, today of all days.

[30 : 30] Don't leave here unchanged. Don't leave here without at least asking the question, can that happen for me?

Is that real? Can I do that? Will it save me? Know that his resurrection can save us. Put your trust in him.

Know his power and love towards us who believe. Let's pray for that together. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Gracious Father, our prayer is simple.

That you might give us the spirit of wisdom and of revelation to truly know ye. That we might have the eyes of our hearts opened by your spirit to truly know and deeply grasp in our hearts what is the hope to which you've called us.

[31 : 35] What are the riches of your glorious inheritance in us? How you love us? And what is the immeasurable greatness of your power towards us who believe?

Even according to the measure of the working of your great might by which you raised your son from the dead and seated him in heaven. Lord, change us, transform us by this knowledge, we pray.

Bring those who are dead to life and bring those of us who are alive to a deeper knowledge and security in the resurrection of Jesus, we pray.

And we ask in his name. Amen. Amen. Thank you.