

Ephesians – The One Body of Christ
“Authority, Power and Dominion”
Ephesians 1:15-23

As the children are dismissed for children's worship, please join me in prayer that we would pray that the Lord would illuminate these scriptures to us, that we might understand.

Heavenly father, as we come to you, we pray that you would grant us the gift of grace, a spirit of wisdom and revelation, that as we consider your Word that you have written for us, that it would be transformative to us, that it would not just transform our way of thinking, but what we desire and what we hope for and ultimately how we live. It's a miracle Lord that those whose voices could be heard mocking you on the cross can now be heard lifting you up in praise and worship. It is only by the gift of your grace that that is possible. It's in Christ's name we pray. Amen.

We continue in our series in the letter to the Ephesians.

And we're moving on now from that opening section. We are moving on from that opening section when the greeting is given, where he greets them in grace and peace. And then Paul has this interesting, benediction that he offers. It's a blessing of the Lord. And in that blessing, he reminds them how they are adopted, how they are redeemed, how they are made heirs, and how they are ultimately assured through the power of the Holy Spirit in Christ. And it's in that context that we now move on to this next part, where Paul is going to offer a prayer. It's actually a prayer of thanksgiving and supplication. But notice when he says, for this reason, he's referring to the passage that we just read last week. So please join me in your scriptures in Ephesians chapter one, verses 15 through 23.

For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the father of glory, may give you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you? What are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints? And 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, and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule, and all authority and power and dominion, and above every name that his name's, 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, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

Well, as many of you know, if you came to the candidate weekend that I did when I gave my testimony, you heard that I am a child of a naval officer, and that means I grew up in the military life, which meant that I got to move about every 1 to 3 years of my life. And because of my dad's career, for one reason or another, it was like every year. So as a result, I went to four high schools. Okay? I went to four high schools. This is kind of my version to my daughters of I had to walk uphill both ways in the snow to get to high school. I tell them I went to four high schools. You think changing ??? I don't I don't say that, but I remember they were all good high schools, but one of the high schools I went to, I remember was particularly tough. This was in Jacksonville, Florida. I won't name it. I guess the alumni are here with us today. But it was a particularly tough school. It was a school where you just had to pay attention to what you were doing and where you were because you could get into trouble and not just trouble with teachers. You had to worry about your fellow students. But I quickly learned that the most dangerous place to be was not necessarily in the hallways. The most dangerous place was to be in the classroom if the teacher lost control of the class. You see, if the teacher lost control of the class, if the teacher's authority got somehow undermined, a terrible thing would happen. You see, when the authority was undermined, there would be a vacuum. And there were people in the class who were waiting to fill the vacuum -- the bullies, the class clowns, the students who felt like they had nothing to lose -- would rush into that authority vacuum when the teacher lost control of the class, you'd have student factions develop. It really would become kind of a form of survival of the fittest. And if you thought having a hard teacher over you was bad, try having students kind of running amok in class. That was really dangerous. That was really terrifying.

Now, you don't have to be an astute observer of culture to notice that this doesn't just happen in classrooms. We see this happen in society around us. Oftentimes, when authority comes to a crisis, power comes in and kind of creates a crunch because you have different forces of power that come in to fill the void of the authority that's been lost. And as a result, so often we lose social structure, we lose order. What Paul calls dominion. Dominion begins to fall apart when authority is in crisis. The crunch of power sets in that leads to the crumbling of social order and in dominion. And we can see that this is happening even in ways in the society around us today. A lot of the old institutions that had authority in the past seem to be losing their authority, don't they? Educational institutions, news media, places where everyone used to go because they were trusted, sources of authority, of information. But it's not just them. It's armed forces, law enforcement, government agencies, science and medical experts. Even the church is experiencing a kind of decline in trust as sources of authority in society.

As a matter of fact, just to make the point, regardless of your political affiliation, regardless of which side of the political aisle you sit on, that list of groups I just mentioned, you probably heard one that you said, well, they kind of deserve it, don't they? And I'm not here to say that

they don't deserve it. I'm not here to say that they haven't done things to undermine their authority. All I want to point out is this that when there is an authority vacuum, the power dynamics kick in. When you lose authority, the gears of power stop grinding. And the people who lose out on that are those people who don't have power or authority. You see, when there's a crisis of power, the dynamics kick in to fill the void and as a result, our sense of order, dominion and social structure break down. We've seen this happen in large scales in American history. In the lead up to the Civil War, we saw that take place during the 1960s and the Cultural Revolution that we saw in the United States. We saw it also happen. But what I want to point out here is it doesn't just happen in the United States. This has happened throughout history.

As a matter of fact, the time in which Paul is writing to the Ephesians is a very similar time where authority was beginning to break down. There were conflicting power dynamics that led to a crunch for those who were stuck in the void. And finally, that led to a kind of decline and decay and crumbling, of dominion and order and social structure.

Yes. Paul is writing to Ephesus during the time of the Roman Empire, and the Roman Empire was known for ruling with an iron fist. But you have to remember, you can only rule so much. And as you get more and more land, it's harder and harder to inflict your rule on the local colonies. As a matter of fact, one time when I was in China was working in a mission and I was in a town that was far away from Beijing, and I remember on Sunday morning being struck by the worship that was going on around me. You could walk down the street and actually hear out of some of the buildings you could hear Christian songs being sung. And I remember telling someone like, I, I thought religion was it was it was not allowed in this way in China. And he said, well, we have a saying here, the mountains are high and the king is far away. I thought, this is a good. So, in other words, being farther away from Beijing, you had more freedom in terms of how you could worship, at least back in this day. Well, the same was true for the Roman Empire. Though they ruled with an iron fist, they were far away from Ephesus, and Ephesus had existed for a long time. It predated the Roman Empire by centuries. As a matter of fact, by the time the Romans arrived, Ephesus was already a kind of sprawling commercial center because of its multiple harbors that led to the highway systems that, when it spread, kind of spiderweb throughout the region of Anatolia, which is modern day Turkey. Some of you have probably been to ancient Ephesus before. And you know what I'm talking about. There were multiple harbors that could lead to trade deeper into the interior. As a result, Ephesus had become quite a commercial center and the powers of industry were at work. There so that people might make more and more money and grow and grow more wealth. But it wasn't just a colony of the Roman Empire, and it wasn't just a commercial center. Ephesus was also a religious center. As a matter of fact, it was the home of one of the great ancient wonders of the world, the temple to Artemis. The pantheon of, of pagan gods were around. You could find marks of them around every street

corner. You could find them etched on the sides of every building to not participate in that form of worship, which is worshipping a pantheon of pagan gods, set you apart.

You see, there are many social forces at play in the city, commercial and pagan imperial interests which often intersected with each other and as a result, the church often found itself kind of ground up in the gears of these power dynamics. And that's why Paul is writing to them this passage that he's writing today. It's good for us to know this context, because Paul wants to encourage them. They know that Paul is not the only Christian who's getting persecuted in the first century. They're experiencing persecution as well. And he wants to encourage them, particularly early in their identity in Christ. He wants them to know that, yes, though they face many dangers, they should know that all authority, all power, all dominion on earth is placed beneath Christ's perfect will, his perfect reign, and that this is where their hope lies.

So as we consider this passage today, I want to point out one thing like the passage last week. This passage, verses 15 to 23, is actually one long sentence. This is one complete thought that Paul is using to develop to this final conclusion that we'll get to in just a minute. But notice that he's offering a prayer. But it's a prayer that kind of flows one after another in the way that Paul writes. It's a long sentence, but it's showing us the kind of development that reaches a crescendo at the end.

So notice his prayer starts off as a prayer of thanksgiving. He's praying to the Lord, I give thanks. I give thanks for the church in Ephesus. And yet then the prayer kind of changes and becomes a prayer of supplication. Paul is willing to do that. We see this in his letters. He's willing to start off in praise, offering thanksgiving, and then as he's praying and have his mind kind of go, well, as a matter of fact, I need to I need to address this need over here. And I don't know about you, but this is a help to me. If you're someone who thinks about your prayer life, if you think about like, how am I praying? And I'm if I'm trying to do adoration and confession and thanksgiving and supplication, you know, it's a great way of dividing up your prayers. I don't know about you. Sometimes I go, but I'm doing adoration. Sometimes, and my mind kind of wanders into supplication. Paul is saying, that's okay, that's normal. As we reflect on God's character, it's normal for us to then turn to the needs that we have in this life.

So notice how Paul begins. He begins his prayer of thanksgiving by saying, for this reason, now remember, what is he referring to? He's referring to the passage that he had just looked at. He just laid out how we are. Remember what we said last week? We are adopted. We're redeemed. We are made heirs, and we are sealed with assurance in the spirit. He's saying for that reason, the fact that God has been saving you from all eternity. For that reason, I give thanks.

But notice Paul isn't just rooted in his theology of predestination. Okay, there is that. He's saying for this reason, that God has been writing your salvation since before the foundations of the earth. He starts off with us for that reason. But also what? And the good reports that I have heard concerning you. You see, Paul isn't merely concerned with the doctrine of predestination. He's also interested in seeing the fruits of that doctrine worked out in the world around him. He begins with knowledge of the eternal will for this reason. But then he moves on to knowledge of the present world. Because I have heard of your faith. Now we don't know how he'd heard of them. We honestly don't know how reports came to Paul. We know that he was a very relational person, and would keep up with those with whom he was working. As you remember, Ric Cannada preaching last Sunday at my installation. We did not plan this out, but he spoke about acts, but it was about the Ephesian church as it's found in acts, and it was fascinating to hear how Paul had been to Ephesus multiple times. He even spent years there working with them in the work of evangelism and discipleship. And so he's heard about them not just from his own immediate experience, but also as he's been keeping up with them on his missionary journeys. And so he draws encouragement from the faithfulness that is the fruit of faith in the church. But notice he's giving thanks for them. I give thanks for you knowing your eternal the foundation of your salvation, knowing the reports that I hear of you today. But he says that draws the attention of my heart to what you will need to continue in your faithfulness. So we see in verses 17 to 23, Paul moves on from a prayer of thankfulness very quickly into a prayer of supplication. He's asking on their behalf of these things of the Lord.

See, Paul is saying, I am thankful for your faith, but I know that you what you will need to continue in the faith in the face of the opposition that you're experiencing because of the crisis of authority and the crunch of power and the crumbling of dominion. So in particular, Paul wants to highlight these three things. These are the things that the church in Ephesus need in order to persist in the faith. And the first one is this. We see it in verses 17 through 18. They need **enlightenment**, enlightenment by the spirit of the word. Secondly, they need **encouraging**. They need an encouragement in the hope that they have in Christ Jesus. That's verses 18 to 19. And then thirdly, they need to recognize the their **enfolding**, that they have been enfolded into Christ and made his body. That's verses 20 through 23.

So let's look at these all individually. But I do want to continue to discuss them in the context of Paul's overarching concern. He's saying, yes, I know the things are difficult. I know the things started off well, by the way. We know that when he first came to emphasize, the church really thrived. It's spread out, it's name and his fame were spread out over the whole region, as people saw it, as a source of gospel hope through evangelism and discipleship. The church had had some pretty great years, and yet in recent years it had come to a more difficult time in its history that had fallen on hard times. They saw the social structure and the creative order

crumbling around them, and they began to wonder, Lord, can we persist? Can we make it? Can we survive?

So look at what Paul says to encourage them in verse 17 says, I give thanks for you, but as I'm thinking about you, it makes me want to pray this. And this is verse 17, *May God give you the spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he is called you.*

Now I want to say something about this idea of enlightenment. Having the eyes of our hearts enlightened, we have to recognize, first of all, something about this -- the way our culture today uses the language of enlightenment is a little different than how Paul is using it. We often use enlightened and today we say, oh, someone's been enlightened. The idea is that they've come upon some kind of secret knowledge. You think about pantheism or Buddhism or some of the New Age, you know, ideas you've heard. Where someone is enlightened means they realize something that's kind of hidden from the rest of us.

I want to point out something about Paul. He does not use enlightened to mean that he means literally, like, let the lights come on in your eyes, let the light come on in your heart so that you're no longer in darkness. But you are now seeing clearly, and you can see the thing that's right in front of you. Paul is saying, May the spirit enlighten you. Just as we prayed right before the sermon and that prayer of illumination, just as we sing, when we sing that great Getty hymn, speak, O Lord, where he is saying, spirit, open the eyes of their hearts, that they might see what is already readily available to them in the word.

This is an important point to make, that the truth of the gospel is not a secret knowledge. Yeah. When you come to Briarwood, we don't say, well, you can attend for a while, but at a certain point we're going to get to the secret stuff and you'll have to leave again, because that's just for the true believers, right? You don't have to rise to a certain level in the church. You don't have to get to the 23rd level to really get the truth of the gospel. It's all right there. It's a public faith. We have a book, we hand it out. If it's not in your language, we're going to translate it. This is public information. This is not a secret knowledge. This is a public knowledge. It's right there to be seen and to be shared. I'd actually argue this is one of the distinctiveness of the Christian faith. Ours is a public knowledge.

However, Paul also recognizes this, that without the work of the spirit enlightening us, our finitude (limitedness) and our fallenness, our sinfulness is what that means. Our finitude and our fallenness will constantly blind us if the spirit does not enlighten us to the teaching of the word. You see, without the work of the spirit, we will not see it. We won't understand because we will still be serving our own selfish, sinful ends. Paul saying, as long as you're still living in that darkness that you have cast upon yourself, no one put it on you. You have put it upon

yourself. As long as you're still living in that kind of spiritual confirmation bias, where everything you see is put through this algorithm so that you can spit out some kind of conclusion that only supports your own selfish ends. As long as that is still the case, then you will not see what is right in front of you, which is that Jesus Christ is Lord.

However, if the spirit doesn't light in your eyes, if the spirit does regenerate your heart, that is by the way, that is what illumination is. If you're wondering in that prayer of illumination, what are we praying for? This is what illumination is. Illumination is the being born again part happening in your mind. It's the regeneration of your thoughts so that you notice that not just your heart is alive, that your mind is alive, that you can read the Word of God, and you can see what is plainly right there in front of you. And that is that Jesus Christ is Lord. You see, when we are enlightened and we see Christ in faith, and when we turn away from that brokenness, that sinful reasoning that gripped us before, and we have the Holy Spirit kind of take us and turn our faces towards him so that we can see him and we can glory in him, and we can be drawn to him. It is the most natural thing in the world to come to faith. It's the most natural thing in the world to believe. It's like a water dripping. It's like water drops dripping off the side of a roof. It is just inextricably, irresistibly drawn to the ground. It's the most natural thing when you finally see Christ with your eyes enlightened. It's the most natural thing in the world to love him because he is worthy to be praised.

See, this is the enlightenment that Paul's talking about. He's saying, spirit, clear away the shadows, clear away the darkness so that he can see the truth. And when they see the truth, they'll desire him.

Now we continue on because that enlightenment doesn't just stand where it is. It's not just that now we have the right ideas in life. And so that's kind of our goal. That's not it. What's the goal is that now we've been enlightened, we can be encouraged -- look at verse 18 and 19. Look what he says. Why is this that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you? What are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints? And what is the immeasurable greatness of his power towards us who believe? You see, having been enlightened now, you can know. Now you can see, and you can be encouraged because you realize that we have hope -- now the hope is a future thing. It is a looking forward.

It's an inheritance that is awaiting those who persevere in the faith. Paul is saying, I know you feel impoverished in this world (Ephesians). I know you feel out of power. You look around and you see all these big dynamics moving around you, and you think we're going to be crushed. Who can contain us? You feel impoverished. You feel as if you're living out of a scarcity model. But he says, when you come to understand Christ, you will recognize that your life is not marked by scarcity in any ultimate sense, but rather it is marked by glorious inheritance.

Now, I do want to point out something interesting, and this is a fascinating part of this passage. If you remember last week we talked about how we are heirs in Christ. Notice what he says here, though. Notice what he says. Now that we have been enlightened, that we may know, and look what he says. He talks about this inheritance that we have the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints doesn't say, your glorious inheritance doesn't say our glorious inheritance. He says his glorious inheritance. And honestly, scholars didn't just disagree. I mean, as to whether or not this his is referring back to God or God is the subject of the sentence. May God do these things. May he enlighten you. Okay. Or is this referring back to Christ Jesus because it's in Christ Jesus that we are being enlightened by God? Now, to a certain extent, it kind of doesn't matter because God in Christ Jesus are identified here, of course, is first and second person of the Trinity throughout all of Paul's theology. So it's not incredibly important, though it does kind of add a little zest one way or zest another way, depending on how you understand what the his is referring back to. But here's what is important -- is that this is different from our inheritance. Yes, in Christ we inherit ourselves, the Kingdom of God. Yes, we inherit the world. But here we're seeing something different. We're being told that we ourselves are God's inheritance, are Christ's inheritance. We are his prized possession. We are his inheritance, which he will never let go of, and he will never put at risk. We should find a deep sense of belonging in this, and we should find an incredible fortitude in the knowledge that the whole plan of redemption that we talked about last week-- remember that when we said, God never, we'll never stop loving you because he never began loving you. What? Your hardest boss told us he loved you forever. There's never been a time when he didn't love you and then began to love you. That whole plan of redemption is getting worked out throughout time and around the cosmos. That whole plan of redemption that culminates in Christ was established out of the divine will. Why? So that he might inherit us as a redeemed people.

What is Paul getting at? Why is he saying this? But why, why, why, why is he taking this time to talk about our inheritance to God? This seems like this would be an encouragement to God. If anything, why is it an encouragement to us? And I think this is what he's getting at here. He's saying this do you know, do you do you have any idea how much you are loved? Do you have any idea how much you are cherished? How do you think you would live?

Paul is saying, how do you think you would live if you actually believe that the God of the cosmos longed and yearned for you as his greatest inheritance? How do you think that would change the way you worship on Sunday morning? How would that change the way that you interact with your neighbors, the way that you go to work, the way that you drive on 280? I say this, you know, as the preacher says, one finger points you. I've got three pointing back at me, and my thumb is pointing at the choir. You ever heard that before? Okay, I hear you.

Paul is reminding them not to be distracted by the riches of this world, and not to be distracted by the suffering of this world, because none of it, none of it can even hold a candle. It can't even hold a candle to God's glorious inheritance of us, and what that means to be his most prized possession. God cherishes you, and as a result, what does he say in verse 19? As a result, you receive the immeasurable greatness of his power, which is toward those of us who believe -- because he cherishes you so as his glorious inheritance, you receive the immeasurable, the immeasurable greatness of his power.

This is one of those things that as, as, as a as a man, I understood. But it wasn't until I grew older and became a father that I began to really understand what Paul is saying here. Now, you don't have to be a father or mother. You can be in a family, you can be a sibling. But as you grow and you love those who are around you, particularly the little ones around you, those who are your inheritance because they are the ones who are coming out of us to the next generation. You get to understand this. See, as a father, I know that I will do anything within my power to sustain and to protect and to provide for my children. I know that I will do anything in my power to protect and sustain them, even to my own hurt. You see, when they when they come home and they're concerned and they're worried, what are they thinking? They're thinking that it's all on them. It's all their power. What will they be able to do to protect themselves, to sustain themselves, to provide for themselves? But what they don't realize is that their greatest strength is actually not their strength, their greatest strength on earth is the love of their parents, is the love of their father. How I'm willing to dedicate all of my energies and all of my time, and all of my wealth and all of my resources to their success.

How much greater is the power of God towards those who believe? As a result, we ought to not live out of a scarcity model in our faith, but out of abundance model. Because we are cherished by God, we are free to be as bold as we can be in evangelism. We can be as courageous as we can be in discipleship, because we know that our Divine Father is directing all of his affection and all of his love, and all of the immeasurable greatness of his power towards our eternal success. So we can be deeply, deeply encouraged.

Now, how do we know that he will do this? How do we know? Says Paul. You've been enlightened. Your eyes have been opened, you've been encouraged, and what you have is the glorious, inherited sense of God, the immeasurable greatness of his power. How do you know that he will do this? Because you have seen what he has done in Christ Jesus.

This leads us to our third prayer of supplication from Paul, that we would be enfolded into Christ. As we have already seen before, when the apostles talk about Jesus, they don't have any exceptions. They don't have qualifications. They don't do caveats they say Jesus fulfills some of the Old Testament, right? What do they say? He fulfills all of it. They don't see Christ as he is. He is a priest amongst many other priests. No, no. He is our high priest. The only priest we need.

You know, don't say he's another one of the prophets in the line of prophets. They say no. We used to have prophets. Now we have the son. We have the revelation itself.

Notice what he says here. Jesus doesn't just get some of the authority has authority in the church. That's not the only place God has. Jesus has authority. Notice where his authority is. He rose from the dead. He ascended into heaven, where he sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. And all authority has been given to him -- is it some authority and power and dominion? No, it's all authority, power and dominion. Or maybe. Maybe he's just a little bit above the authority and power and dominion. He goes, no, no, he's far above the authority and power and dominion. All things were put under his feet. There's no qualification. There's no exception. He does not have some authority. He has all authority. Or, to put it another way, for the Ephesians, Caesar has no standing in the heavenlies. Caesar has no leverage to bring against Christ Jesus because he is above all authority and dominion and power. Artemus has no authority before Christ's Reign. The commercial powers of industry and Ephesus have no standing in his court. Neither does Satan, neither sin. Neither does death. Neither does cancer. Neither does fear. Neither does failure in business, neither does social embarrassment. As with the Ephesians, we see a crisis of authority all around us. It leads to the crunch of power and the crumbling of worldly dominion. But Christ is far above every one of those things, and he will not fail. And then what Paul says, and this is what he's been wanting to say the whole passage, he says, not only will Christ not fail, even better, we are enfolded into him in his authority, power, and dominion.

Now we get back to what the question that we asked about two weeks ago when we started this series. What is the church? And Paul wants to respond with a resounding the church is the body of Christ. Christ sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty, far above every authority, power, and dominion, so that he has ultimate authority, power, and dominion.

And if our head is in heaven, Christ, the risen, resurrected physical body of Jesus is in heaven. And yes, indeed there is a mystery, but a wondrous one. And if our head is in heaven, then you'll know where his body is. It is here on earth. If you remember, Jesus himself said, I have done great things, but you will see greater things than what I have done when I continue my work through the body.

Jesus ministered in Galilee and around Judah. He made some forays into the Decapolis region and into Samaria. And yet through the work of the church, he has affected his eternal reign, his eternal kingdom, to expand over the face of the earth to countries that Paul and Peter and Thomas and John the Baptist could never have dreamed of.

That Jesus is our head and we are his body. We are enfolded into him, into his life giving, world altering kingdom project.

There is so much more to say about this, and in many ways, the letter to the Ephesians, as we will say, is an extended essay on what it means to be in Christ as the church. And so we're going to talk a lot more about this down the road. But here's what I want us to get early on is the gospel about having your sins forgiven? Absolutely. And that's a great start. Is the gospel about being made holy like saints, so that we can say we are truly consecrated and sanctified? Absolutely. Okay. But is so much more than that. Is the gospel about receiving a new song in our mouth? As the psalmist tells us, I've been saved and now I have a new song of worship. Absolutely. What a gift. And yet, don't stop there.

You see, in the gospel we are enfolded. Can you hear this? Can you imagine it? We are enfolded, united in Christ, and deployed in his service to be his body here on earth. I love this quote from JI Packer, who was a theologian and taught for many years in Vancouver, British Columbia at Regent College. He actually taught the first arts class I ever took 26 years ago. He came in and taught part of the class, and that was a great honor and a blessing. But he says this. He says, Jesus of Nazareth is Lord. Now he's seen us in that way. Specifically, he's linking Jesus to that, that profane city from which Jesus came. In other words, he's connecting Jesus, not just talking about Jesus in general, second person of the Trinity, but this historical man who lived very God and very man. He says, this Jesus of Nazareth is Lord. He is not just a figure of the past, but a living reality of the present. And he exercises his lordship through the Holy Spirit and the lives of those who acknowledge him. See what Paul is saying here, and what JI Packer is reiterating is that Christ is not like the other founders of religion. He's not someone who taught impressively or lived an impressive life. He's not merely that he is a present reality. He is reigning in heaven, and he is at work in every part of the world today, through his body, the church. When we gather together, he tells us, I'm there with you. You're my body. When we go out and minister in the cities, in the neighborhoods, in the workplaces around us, he goes with us and does his work through us. And we have nothing to fear because no crisis of authority, no crunch of power, no crumbling of dominion can ultimately stand against us because it is all far below him. And so that should be our prayer this morning, that having been enlightened in the spirit, we may be encouraged, and the hope that we have is those who are enfolded into the body of Christ.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, as we do come before you, I pray that you would help us to understand these things. Paul himself calls this a mystery, even though it's in plain view. We're also told that the angels long to look in upon these things that we get to experience. They, our union with Christ. I pray, Lord, that as we consider these things, may the spirit be at work enlightening us, so that we might find hope in the whole council of God, particularly in our union with Christ by faith. It's in his name we pray.

Amen.

