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Sermon Notes

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Christ's Resurrection: Infinite Power at Work in You

Ephesians 1:18-23

Introduction

The astonishing power of the Saturn V rocket

I. The Lasting Joy of Easter: Hope for the Future

A. The Most Joyful Christian Celebration

B. Rejoicing over Death's Ultimate Demise

1. The Death of Death... that powerful, mocking enemy

John Owen: *The Death of Death in the Death of Christ*

2. In one sense: Death already destroyed by Christ's resurrection

2 Timothy 1:10 Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel

3. Death not yet fully destroyed... still some sadness to be faced

1 Corinthians 15:25-26 For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. ²⁶ The last enemy to be destroyed is death.

4. This is why we celebrate... Satan's kingdom of death is being destroyed generation after generation

C. Rejoicing in the Future Glory

1. Not only do we rejoice at the prospect of seeing our dread enemy destroyed

2. We rejoice more at the future glory that awaits for us

3. This is the full vision of the glory of God... something so incredibly bright it will forever replace the sun and all man-made lights

The sun emanates a constant light so bright it would blind you if you looked at it for even a few seconds

The moon is the second brightest entity in the sky, so bright you can read by its light at night

The brightest star in the night sky as seen from earth is Sirius... from the Greek word meaning “searing” or “scorching”... it is twice as bright as any other star visible in the sky

The brightest manmade light on earth emanates from the top of the Luxor hotel, a giant pyramid structure, in Las Vegas, Nevada. A total of 45 xenon lights, each one as big as a washing machine and with the brightest bulb available, shoots a powerful blast of radiant light straight up into the sky. The light beaming from the top of this artificial mountain is so bright, astronauts can see it as they fly overhead. Airline pilots are cautioned to avoid the area, as the beam of light can blind them temporarily if they fly through it. Sadly, this light is totally wasted—it’s not illuminating anything as it blazes into empty space.

However, all of these created light sources are as nothing compared to the light which will fill the New Heavens and the New Earth

The direct vision of the glory of God awaits us, all who have trusted in Christ

Revelation 21:23 The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp.

Revelation 22:3-5 The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. ⁴ They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. ⁵ There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever.

4. This vision will be so overwhelming it will transform us forever

1 John 3:2 Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.

D. Christ’s Central Promise: “Because I live, you also will live.”

John 14:19 Because I live, you also will live.

There is a complete and total link between Christ and His people... His life is their life

Colossians 3:4 When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

This is the joyful celebration of Easter... when the display of immense power in Christ is preached to give us hope for the future... this is precisely what Paul prays for

II. Paul’s Three-Fold Prayer for Understanding

Ephesians 1:18-19 I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his

glorious inheritance in the saints, ¹⁹ and his incomparably great power for us who believe.

A. Paul's Three Requests for Spiritual Understanding

1. Paul writing to Christians
2. Speaks of the immense spiritual blessings they have already received through faith in Christ
 - a. "every spiritual blessing in Christ"
 - b. Chosen before the creation of the world
 - c. Destined to be holy and blameless in His sight
 - d. Predestined to be adopted as sons
 - e. Lavished with His grace in Christ Jesus
 - f. Given spiritual wisdom and insight, including knowledge of spiritual mysteries
 - g. God's intention: to bring everything in the universe under one Head, Christ
 - h. God's purpose: to the praise of His glory!!!!!!!!!!
3. Paul goes on to speak of God's absolute sovereignty over all things

Ephesians 1:11 In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will

4. Paul describes the Ephesian Christians' personal situation
 - a. Included in Christ when they heard the gospel and believed
 - b. Marked in Christ with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit
 - c. Now bearing good fruit in keeping with their faith: faith in Christ and love for all the saints
5. Paul then commences to pray diligently for them
 - a. Fervent prayer not incompatible with God's sovereignty or with predestination
 - b. That is miserable human logic

- c. Both Christ (John 17) and Paul (Ephesians 1) prays for the very things they say are absolutely certain according to the plan of God

6. Center of Paul's prayer life: SPIRITUAL UNDERSTANDING

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.

Prayer request #1: KNOWING GOD BETTER... the very essence of our eternal life

John 17:3 Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.

AND to know GOD better, you must KNOW CHRIST BETTER

Philippians 3:10-11 I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, ¹¹ and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead.

B. The Eyes of Your Heart Enlightened

Ephesians 1:18-19 I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know

1. Interesting expression... "eyes of your heart"

Illus. "Turn your eyes upon Jesus; look full in His wonderful face; and the things of earth will grow strangely dim in the light of His glory and grace."

"Open the eyes of my heart, Lord, open the eyes of my heart... I want to see you, I want to see you."

Both songs people frequently sing with EYES CLOSED!!!

2. "Heart" = internal part of you that feels, senses, understands, believes, loves, cherishes, plans, wills, chooses, desires... that precious internal part of you
3. "Eyes of your heart" = heart's spiritual sense... internal enlightenment, spiritual understanding... an internal vision by faith in the word of God... not through light hitting the eye but through truth hitting the heart
4. Paul is praying for God to communicate spiritual vision, enlightenment, insight, illumination to the Ephesian Christians
5. Unlike Buddhist "enlightenment", this is focused on cognitive spiritual truths that must be understood... they can be taught in precepts, in doctrines

Buddhist enlightenment: The Wisdom of Emptiness... The wisdom that arises from the direct experience of all phenomena being empty of independent existence.

Achieved imperfectly on earth through meditation on meaningless conundrums, like "What's the sound of one hand clapping"... goal is to empty yourself of all things

6. Paul's prayer is the exact opposite:

Filled with knowledge of God, of His person, His plans, His power, His will, all that He is

Ephesians 3:19 that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

That fullness comes through the heart... through the understanding of the heart, the "eyes of the heart"... and light comes when God gives it directly through His Spirit and His word

Jonathan Edwards' sermon, preached at Northampton, 1734: *A Divine and Supernatural Light, Immediately Imparted to the Soul by the Spirit of God*

This "divine and supernatural light imparted to the soul by the Spirit of God" is "**a true sense of the divine excellency of the things revealed in the word of God, and a conviction of the truth and reality of them thence arising.**"

God gives this inner light directly to the soul, and that is what Paul prays for here!

7. NOW: What will be the topic of this divine and supernatural light imparted to the soul?

THREE THINGS

- 1) The **Hope** to which He has called you"
- 2) The **Riches** of His **glorious inheritance** in the saints
- 3) Incomparably great power toward us who believe

C. "The Hope to which He has called you"

1. The hope that someday we will see Christ in His glory
2. The hope that someday we shall be like Him for we shall see Him as He is
3. The hope that we shall be transformed forever and leave behind all effects of sin in our bodies and souls... we shall be perfectly holy in soul and perfectly whole in body
4. The hope that the universe itself will be transformed and made perfect, a home in which the perfectly righteous will live

D. “The Riches of His Glorious Inheritance in the Saints”

1. Paul also wants us to know how rich we are
2. How incredibly rich is our inheritance
3. God Himself is the inheritance, but it is not enjoyed ALONE
4. Rather, it is a perfect inheritance we will share in perfect unity with all the saints of all ages and all nations
5. With them, the brothers and sisters in Christ, we will dwell eternally wealthy... having a vast immeasurable wealth beyond calculation

E. Third Aspect: God’s Incomparably Great Power FOR Us

Ephesians 1:19 and his incomparably great power for us who believe.

1. Paul doesn’t pray that we would have more power here
2. No... rather, he prays that we would know how much power God is exerting in us and for us every moment to get us to our final destination
3. The first two would overwhelm us if we didn’t understand how much God is doing to be sure we GET THERE!!! We would only despair if our immeasurable inheritance were clearly described but we were left to our own to obtain it
4. Paul wants us to know how much power God has been exerting and will continue to exert in us to get us to our heavenly reward
5. He thus compares it to the central item of our faith... Christ’s astonishingly powerful resurrection
6. The same power that raised Christ from the dead and seated Him in the ultimate seat of power is at work in you... for you also were dead, only you were dead in transgressions and sins... and like Christ God raised you up; and His power will continue to work in you and around you on your behalf until you come into your full inheritance

III. God’s Power in Christ’s Infinite Journey

A. Christ’s Lowest State

1. Dead on the Cross
2. Picture of total rejection
 - a. Rejection by humanity... the Jews and the Romans alike

b. Rejection by God

“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

3. Picture also of total powerlessness
 - a. Jews mocked: “If you are the Son of God, come down from that cross”
 - b. Once He was dead, the powerlessness was complete... death treated Christ like he does any human being... Christ had been crushed by death; Christ, it seemed, had battled death and lost, the way all of us do
 - c. Christ dead on the cross = total powerlessness, so it seemed
4. Christ buried sealed the picture
 - a. Wrapped in strips of linen by other people
 - b. Lifeless, bloody, immobile, just a dead corpse
 - c. Laid passively in the tomb, lying on a rocky ledge inside a cave
 - d. Motionless

B. Christ’s Infinite Journey

1. As the Roman soldiers looked in on Him, could they have imagined what was about to happen?
2. Could they have imagined the infinite journey Christ would take
3. Could they have dreamed that this lifeless body, wrapped in strips of linen, lying lifeless in the tomb would soon ascend through the sky and be welcomed at the right hand of the throne of Almighty God
4. Could they have dreamed that Jesus of Nazareth would soon take His place as the King of Kings and Lord of Lords?
5. That this motionless dead man would be the firstborn from among the dead and inhabit a new kind of physical existence, the firstfruit of a New Heaven and New Earth
6. That this body so frail, so weak, so fragile, dying so quickly on the cross, would rise transformed, never again to submit to death or disease or fatigue or weakness or hunger or pain
7. That this body would rise transformed to be glorious and unchanging, eternally perfect

8. As they gazed on His lifeless body before the large stone was rolled in front of the entrance, could they have dreamed that Jesus would rule heaven and earth, infinitely more powerful than any power they had ever experienced?
9. They had perhaps seen Rome, called the “eternal city”... perhaps once in their lives they had laid eyes on Tiberius Caesar, the most powerful man on earth... perhaps they had seen throngs of Romans chanting his name, thousands of mighty, world-conquering Roman legionnaires bowing in Caesar’s presence... that is all they knew of power
10. But as they stood at the entrance of the tomb that Friday evening, could they have dreamed that Jesus would rule a Kingdom that would never end, that would put an end to all human empires, and sweep them away like chaff on the threshing floor in the summer?
11. That this dead Jew would sit on a terrifying white throne and judge the souls of every human that had ever lived or ever would live
12. That before this one solitary life, snuffed out so brutally and shamefully, every knee would bow and by this one name, Jesus, every tongue would confess?
13. That was the infinite journey

C. Aspects of Christ’s Infinite Journey

1. Resurrection from Death to Life
 - a. Power of death actually shattered
 - b. Peter at Pentecost:

Acts 2:24 But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him.

- c. Astonishing!! Usually “impossible” for any to be freed from death
- d. BUT death had no power over Christ
2. Transformed Body
 - a. Jesus had raised others to life
 - b. Jairus’s daughter was “only sleeping” and Jesus woke her up
 - c. Lazarus “has fallen asleep” and Jesus went to wake her up
 - d. BUT these “resurrections” were really just resuscitations... why? For they came alive back into the same corrupt body

- e. Jesus was the first ever to take on an incorruptible body, a spiritual body, one that can last eternally without any need for change

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.

1 Corinthians 15:20 But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.

1 Corinthians 15:42-44 The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; ⁴³ it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; ⁴⁴ it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.

Philippians 3:20-21 But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹ who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.

3. Ascended through the Heavens

- a. Astonishing journey, incomprehensible to us
- b. First heaven = sky
- c. Second heaven = outer space
- d. Third heaven = heavenly dwelling place of spiritual beings... ultimately of God Himself
- e. Christ passed through all the heavenly realms to stop finally at His rightful place

Acts 1:9-10 After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight. ¹⁰ They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going

^{ESV} Hebrews 4:14 Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.

4. Seated at a Position of Ultimate Power

Ephesians 1:20-23 God 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. 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. Christ is FAR ABOVE all rule and authority power and dominion
- b. Indication of the immensity of the journey He traveled
- c. Archangels cover their faces before Him
- d. Powerful devils tremble at the mention of His name
- e. God the Father has placed everything under His feet
- f. Christ the crucified One is Lord of heaven and earth

D. Infinite Journey Requires Infinite Power

- 1. The greater the journey the greater the power needed
- 2. Christ's journey was infinite: from a bloody death under the wrath of God and man alike, from a cold and lifeless place in a tomb carved out of a rock, from this position of total rejection and powerlessness to the ultimate position in the universe... that journey required infinite power
- 3. God the Father exerted that power on His own Son
- 4. The Very thing the Son had entrusted to His Father:

Luke 23:46 Jesus called out with a loud voice, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit." When he had said this, he breathed his last.

- 5. God the Father exerted immeasurable and immense power on Christ

Ephesians 1:19 and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength,

- a. Note the language of power

^{ESV} Ephesians 1:19 and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might

- b. "immeasurable greatness of his power" "incomparably great power"
- c. "working of His great might" "mighty strength"

Illus. Far greater than any strength ever exerted by a human being, far greater than the immensity of power God displayed in creating the universe... the language here implies that this resurrection power exerted in Christ is the pinnacle of the power that God the Father has ever displayed in the history of the universe

- d. This is the power that was at work in Christ to raise Him from the dead and seat Him at God's right hand in the heavenly realms

E. Paul's Point: The SAME Power is at Work in You Who Believe

IV. God's Power for Our Infinite Journey

A. Our Infinite Journey

1. Starting place: "Dead in transgressions and sins"

Ephesians 2:1-3 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.

2. Ending place: seated with Christ in the heavenly realms!!

Ephesians 2:6 God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus

3. Likewise an infinite journey
4. Already miraculously begun by God's supernatural power

Ephesians 2:4-6 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

B. Our Incomplete and Immensely Dangerous Journey

1. Unlike Christ, our journey is incomplete
2. We are not yet fully saved... not yet fully transformed
3. We still dwell in bodies of clay, we still wrestle with indwelling sin
4. We still have divided hearts and minds, we still need faith and hope
5. Our foes are immensely more powerful than we are
 - a. The devil has been successfully tempting people for millennia
 - b. He is immensely powerful, called "the god of this world"
 - c. He is a deceiver and a slanderer and a merciless tyrant and a soul-slayer
 - d. He is vastly more terrifying than you can possibly imagine

- e. So also is the dangerous world system he has set up, with devils to allure you into the pitfalls and traps and landmines he has planted around your every footfall...
 - f. He has great power through the world system to lure you into soul-killing sins, faith-destroying sins, mind-corrupting sins
 - g. Furthermore, you carry around in your body a fleshly power which is gladly amenable to the devil's schemes, a flesh which lusts for pleasure, which yearns to be adored, which is hateful toward the things of God
6. Thus: an infinite journey beset every step of the earthly way by immeasurably powerful foes
 7. What kind of power resource do you have available to make a single step in this arduous way?

Luther: "Did we in our own strength confide, our striving would be losing."

C. God's Immeasurably Great Power IN Us

1. Transforming our hearts: taking out our heart of stone, giving us a heart of flesh
2. Renewing our minds constantly by insights from His word
3. Changing our wills to love and desire and yearn for what He loves and desires and yearns for
4. Convicting us of sin so that we learn to hate sin and reject it
5. Renewing our drive for holiness day after day... waking us each day with incredibly great power to say "Get up, walk with me today! Pray! Read the Bible! Do your good works! Serve me! Avoid that sin! Let's go! Let's move! Let's keep on growing!"

Colossians 1:28-29 We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ. ²⁹ To this end I labor, struggling with all his energy, which so powerfully works in me.

D. God's Immeasurably Great Power AROUND Us

1. Christ is sitting over the circle of the earth, ruling over all earthly things
2. He is the King of kings... placed in that position by God the Father

Ephesians 1:21-22 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.

And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church

3. “For the church” = Christ is in charge of earthly events FOR THE BENEFIT of the church, His body
4. He exerts influence over the smallest and largest affairs on earth so that we can complete our journey
 - a. He turns the hearts of kings to benefit His church
 - b. He filters the temptations of devils so that no one in His church will be tempted beyond what they can bear
 - c. He affects political elections and private conversations and national economics and sporting events and the roll of dice and the falling of sparrows all for a single purpose: that His precious Church may safely complete her infinite journey and be made complete in Him
5. No circumstance can touch you except what Christ has permitted... THAT IS REAL POWER, power of authority, power of rule... for your benefit

E. God’s Power is Perfectly Effective

1. God’s power IN you will not stop until you are complete in Christ
 - a. Until your mind is just like Christ’s
 - b. Until your heart is just like Christ’s
 - c. Until your emotions and will and dreams and plans and yearnings are just like Christ’s
 - d. AND He will not stop until He has raised your body from the dead like Christ’s and made Him the firstborn among many brothers and sisters who are also in perfect resurrection bodies
2. God’s power AROUND you will not stop until you are complete in Christ and your enemies lie eternally dead under your feet and a New Heaven and New Earth become your permanent home
3. This is infinite power for your salvation... and Paul prays that the eyes of your heart would know it today

V. Application

- A. Ponder: why does Paul pray this for Christians? Meditate on each phrase and feel your confidence growing

- B. Be Totally Confident in HIS power to finish your salvation, and totally reject your own power forever!
- C. Pray like this for others: your children, your fellow church-members
- D. Live accordingly: put sin to death with great confidence, witness with great boldness, banish fear and weakness