

**The Ephesians Series**  
**Praying for the Person Who Has Everything (Part 6)**  
**December 2, 2007**  
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Last week we began to consider the power of God that is at work, according to Paul, within every Christian. It's really a difficult thing for us to grasp, however. It's a difficult thing for us to get our own minds around. How can we finite beings begin to grasp or conceive of the infinite power of an infinite God? There are a number of different ways we could try to go there. Let's take this approach briefly as we begin this morning. We know that God created all things. Everything that exists, God made. And so, if we look at His creation, we can see glimpses of His power.

Let's consider, for just a moment, the power of the very smallest particle we know about, the individual atom. You undoubtedly learned in school that all things that exist, everything that exists, are made of atoms. Scientists tell us that every atom has within it, everything single atom has what is called a strong nuclear force, and a weak nuclear force. And those two forces together are what hold the atoms together. And they tell us that the weaker of those two forces within every single atom is, and listen carefully because this is a number you will not get your mind around, the weaker of those two forces is ten billion, billion, billion times stronger than gravity. I don't know what that number looks like, but you get the idea. It's a huge, inconceivable number. The power, the weakest power within every individual atom is ten billion, billion, billion times stronger than gravity, and of course the stronger nuclear force is, as it sounds, even stronger.

Here's the amazing reality. When you start to think about the number of atoms, they cannot be numbered or even accurately guessed. Scientists don't bother counting atoms. They count molecules. A molecule is simply two or more atoms working together in a stable environment. In one cubic centimeter of air, think about this morning, stay with me, and I think this will become clear. In, around this room this morning, this room is filled with air. In any cubic centimeter of air, about the size of a sugar cube. Imagine that in this room this morning in every cubic centimeter of air there are 45 billion, billion molecules. That means there are at least twice as many atoms, because it takes at least two atoms to make a molecule.

So, imagine, this morning, in that little cubic centimeter of air that you're picturing in your mind, many of which fill this room, in every cubic centimeter there are 45 billion, billion molecules, 90 billion, billion atoms at least, and within every single one of those atoms, there is a power that is ten billion, billion, billion times stronger than gravity. You get the idea that there is a lot of power in the universe that God has created?

The power that God has locked into the atoms in even a single little sugar-cube-sized square of air is beyond our comprehension. And the universe is filled with that kind of power. That tells us that the one who made it and the one who sustains it has a level of power that our weak minds cannot even begin to grasp. We cannot conceive of the power of God. And that is exactly what the Bible tells us. It tells us that God's power is unlimited, incomparable, unimaginable, inconceivable. And remarkably, the Bible tells us that the very power of God is at work within us.

Paul's prayer in Ephesians 1 is that you and I would come to understand that reality, in a life-gripping, life-changing way. It's been a great study, this wonderful prayer of the apostle for the church there in Ephesus. It's my hope to finish it together this morning. Let me read it for you one last time beginning in verse 15. Ephesians 1:15.

For this reason I too, [Paul says] having heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus which *exists* among you and your love for all the saints, do not cease giving thanks for you, while making mention *of you* in my prayers; that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him. *I pray that* the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. *These are* in accordance with the working of the strength of His might which He brought about 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 authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And He put all things in subjection 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.

Paul's intercessory prayer here serves as a model for us. As we have seen in these verses, Paul teaches us three aspects of intercessory prayer. In verse 15 we learned the reasons behind

intercessory prayer, as Paul opened up his heart and showed us why he prayed for these Ephesians.

In verse 16 we saw the pattern of intercessory prayer. We saw what Paul's prayer life looked like, and provided for us a model for our own.

Thirdly, we saw in verses 17 to 23, the content of intercessory prayer. Here we learned exactly what it is that Paul prayed for us and for the Ephesians. And it's essentially a prayer for spiritual illumination, illumination in the knowledge of God Himself, the end of verse 17, and illumination secondly in the knowledge of God's blessing, verses 18 to 23. In verses 18 to 23 Paul singles out three spiritual blessings that he especially thinks we fail to fully and adequately understand, that we fail to adequately grasp. And he prays that God would help the Ephesians and us see them in their richness.

Notice the three blessings. In verse 18, "the hope of His calling," in verse 18, the riches of His inheritance," and in verse 19 as we saw last week, "the greatness of His power." Now, as we saw last week in verse 19, Paul teaches us that God has this inherent strength, this inherent ability to overcome all resistance and accomplish whatever it is He sets out to do. God has demonstrated this unstoppable power in many different ways. But Paul has in mind here not God's power in creation, in the atom, or God's power in providence, how He orders our lives, however amazing those may be. Here Paul has in mind God's power in what He continues to do in us, within us, who are Christians. His sanctifying power. Paul prays that you and I would come to grips with the greatness of God's sanctifying power that is at work within us. And he's desperately concerned that we truly don't understand the greatness of that power. And so therefore he prays. He prays that the Spirit will open our minds to grasp it.

And that brings us, today, to verses 20 through 23. Some commentators have seen these verses as a kind of doxology, separate from Paul's prayer for illumination. But there's no indication of that here in the context or in the grammar of this passage. In fact, verses 20 through 23 are simply part of the same long Greek sentence that begins all the way back in verse 15. From verse 15 through the end of the chapter is one sentence in the Greek text. It's all part of Paul's prayer for the Ephesians. And in fact, grammatically, verses 20 through 23 are connected to and dependent on verse 19. You can see this even in the English text. Notice how verse 20 begins. 'Which'. Now we understand that to introduce a dependent clause, in English. The same thing is true in Greek. This is a continuation of the same concept that he's already referred us to. You see, what's happening here in verses 20 through 23, is that in an effort to help us understand

God's power that's at work within us, Paul gives us several illustrations. Specifically, he gives us three examples from what God did in the life of Christ, to show us, to help us understand, the surpassing power of God that's at work within each of us. Three examples of God's power in the life of Christ.

Now, the structure of verses 20 through 23 hinges on three verbs. In verse 20 the verb is translated "brought about." In verse 22 it's translated "put in subjection," literally "he subjected" is what the verb says. He subjected all things under His feet. And the third verb is in verse 22, the second half of the verse, "gave." He gave Him as head over all things to the church. So those three verbs explain for us three different examples of God's power.

They are, number one, the resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ. That's verses 20 and 21. Number two, the subjection of all things to Jesus Christ, in verse 22. That's the second example. And the third example comes at the end of verse 22, the connection of the church to Jesus Christ. Each of those illustrates God's power in a profound way. Let's briefly look at those three examples as Paul lays them out for us here. If you understand these three activities of God in Christ, then you will begin to understand something of the power that is at work within you.

The first example is the resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ. Look at verse 20 "which." That refers back to the concept of power. He's talking about power, and he uses four different synonyms for power at the end of verse 19. And he says "which," or the power ... "He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly *places*."

So, we're talking about this kind of power. The power that God brought about in Christ. Now, the Greek word translated "brought about" there in verse 20 is simply the verb form of the same Greek noun back in verse 19 that's translated as "working." This is kind of a Hebrewism. It literally reads this: "according to the working which He worked in Christ." Or we could say it like this "according to the energy which He exercised in Christ," and specifically, the energy or power that He exercised in Christ when He raised Him from the dead, and when He seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places. God brought Christ to life from out of the dead ones. God raised Christ from all the others who were dead. This is absolutely crucial to the Christian message. The resurrection is foundational to the gospel that we preach. You remember Paul, in 1 Corinthians 15 says, this is the gospel we received and delivered to you, "that [Jesus] ... died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ... that He was buried, and that He was raised [again] ... the third day according to the Scriptures.

Jesus Himself staked His own authority on the resurrection. You remember when He cleansed the temple early in His ministry, and they said, by what authority do you do this? His response in John 2 was: this is my authority, destroy this temple, speaking of His body, and in three days I will raise it up. The only reason for My authority you need is My resurrection. It is, the resurrection, an unparalleled example of the power of God. In Romans 1:4, Paul says that Jesus Christ “was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead.”

But God not only exercised His power in Christ when He raised Him from the dead, but also when He seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, when God brought Christ back to heaven in the ascension, and seated Him at the place of honor next to Himself. The theologians call this the enthronement or the coronation of Jesus Christ. When Jesus returned to heaven, He was enthroned. He was put in a place of honor. He was coronated as King and Sovereign. God had promised, not only that He would raise His son from the dead, but He promised that He would elevate Him to the absolute highest position of authority. Turn back to Psalm 110. Psalm 110 was the Psalm that was most commonly quoted by the apostles in the book of Acts as proof of who Jesus was. Psalm 110:1, David writes, JHWH says to my Lord.”

Now, you’ll remember our Lord Himself used this to ask the religious leaders of Israel, “so who is David talking about if you have JHWH and then you have David’s Lord? How can this be His son, if He’s also His Lord?” And of course it was an enigma that was Jesus Christ. He was both a son of David, but He was David’s Lord. So, “The LORD says to My Lord: [David says this is to Jesus Christ] Sit at My right hand Until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet.”

God the Father says to God the Son, sit at My right hand. I’m going to make every enemy of Yours a footstool for Your feet. I’m going to give you the highest possible position of authority.

Now, go back to Ephesians 1, and notice just how high God elevated His Son. Verse 21. “... He ... seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly *places*, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion...” Now, those four words are a reference to orders or ranks of “angelic beings,” supernatural beings. The word ‘rule’ always speaks, in the Bible, of primacy, or one who has first place in rank. These are the very highest order of angelic beings, rule.

“Authority” is the second word. This word describes those who have freedom to act, freedom to make decisions. These are angelic beings, an order of angelic beings, who are in a position of authority with the right to act and the right to make decisions.

The third word is “power.” This is another category of angelic beings, simply described as having remarkable power.

And the fourth word is “dominion.” It’s a word from which we get the English word “lord.” It’s from “kurios” in the Greek text, and it has the idea of someone who is in the position of sovereign, another class of angelic powers. Now, this is not a comprehensive list of the angelic chain of command. In other places different names are used, and some are substituted. But what this list does reflect is the reality that in the spirit world, and we’re going to find out in Ephesians there is a spirit world, it is real and it’s all around us, in the spirit world there are various ranks and orders. There are various hierarchies and duties and responsibilities.

Now, why would Paul bring this in here? Well, you have to understand a little bit of the times to appreciate this. We know from Colossians, which is an epistle of Paul written around the same time to the same general geographic area, that there were false teachers there in Asia Minor where both Ephesus and Colossae were located. There were false teachers who overestimated the position and power of angelic forces. They spent their time trying to determine the names of the various angelic beings, the various categories, trying to classify them into various orders or ranks.

And they even, according to Colossians 2:18, worshiped angelic beings. That’s why Paul addresses that so directly in Colossians. Turn to Colossians 1 and notice in verse 16. He’s talking about Christ, he says, For by ... [Christ] “all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, [the spirit world, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities [again talking about spiritual authority, ranks of authority] all things have been created through Him and for Him.”

Jesus Christ created all of these powerful angelic beings. Therefore, He is over them. Notice Colossians 2. Look at Colossians 2:10. ... “and in Him you have been made complete, and He [that is Christ] is the head over all rule and authority;”

Jesus Christ not only created it, He’s over it. Back to Ephesians 1. Why does Paul bring in these beings here? And is he referring to holy angels, or is he referring to demonic forces, demonic angels, demons associated with Satan? Well in the context of Ephesians, it is likely that Paul is referring here not to holy angels, but to the evil hierarchy of Satan’s forces. We meet them again in 2:2. We’ll meet them a third time in Ephesians 6 where Paul tells us to put on the armor of

God to stand against these forces we wrestle against. So, he's talking about evil angels, the fallen angels, the hierarchy of Satan's forces.

Harold Hoehner in his commentary writes "these powers most likely are angelic and evil and wish to rob us of our spiritual benefits. Christ is over these authorities, and He will have the final victory." His point is, Paul's point here, is that whatever category of angelic beings you want to talk about, whether rule or authority or power or dominion, Christ has been elevated above them all. And if that isn't enough, notice what he adds at the end of verse 21: "... and every name that is named."

Jesus Christ outranks every other person in the universe. No title God has given any being in the universe is higher than the title He's given Christ. That's what he means by every name that is named. There is no title above the title He's given Christ, and Paul adds at the end of verse 21, "... not only in this age but also in the one to come." Jesus Christ outranks every other person in the universe, and He holds that position not just now, in this age, but also in the one to come, or forever. This is what Paul told the church in Philippi. Turn over to Philippians 2. In this great passage about the incarnation, you remember where he describes the fact in Philippians 2:6, that

... although ... [Christ] existed in the form of God, He did not regard equality with God a thing to be ... [held on to,] but [He] emptied Himself, [of all the independent exercise of His attributes, and He took] ... the form of a ... [slave.]

He was made in our likeness. He humbled Himself, eventually not only to our likeness, but even to death, and that, death on a cross as a common criminal. For this reason, verse 9, because He humbled Himself, because of His humiliation, God highly exalted Him. It already happened, and has bestowed on Christ the name above every name, not the name Jesus, the name Lord. Notice what He says.

so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those ... in heaven ... those on earth ... those under the earth, and ... every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

God has exercised His power in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above every other being in the universe. What are the ramifications of this? Well, they're huge. Look at Colossians 2. Colossians 2:15. He's just talked about Jesus' death on the cross in verse 14, and in verse 15 he says, "When [Christ] had

disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him.”

You know what he’s saying? Paul is describing the Roman general’s victory march. In the Roman world, when a Roman general was victorious, when he defeated his enemies, he came back into the city of Rome leading a triumph march. And in his wake, behind him, far back in the procession would be the leaders of the nation he conquered. Bound in chains, he led them in triumph into the city of Rome. Paul is saying that when Jesus Christ left this earth and ascended into God’s presence, He led a victory triumph procession behind Him with all of those who were His enemies having been defeated.

What’s the application of this to us? Well, it’s huge. Look at Ephesians 2. Here Paul hints at it. Ephesians 2, the application of the fact that God exercised this great power in raising Christ and in seating Him at His right hand. Ephesians 2:1: you were dead. Verse 5, even when we were dead God made us alive together with Christ. By grace you’ve been saved. And He raised us up with Him and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Now here, Paul just gives us a glimpse of the reality. He’s saying there’s some relationship between what’s happened to you and what happened to Jesus when He was raised up and seated at the right hand of God. In some sense, you were raised up with Jesus, and you were seated in the heavenlies. He doesn’t explain it here, but he does explain it in Romans 6 much more fully. Turn over to Romans 6. Here’s the connection. Here’s why this is important. Romans 6:4,

Therefore we have been buried with Christ through baptism into death so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection.

Here’s the application.

knowing this, that our old self was crucified with [Christ], in order that our body of sin [should] [might] be done away with, so that we should no longer be slaves to sin; for he who has died is freed from sin. Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we also shall live with Him, knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again;” Death is not going to be a master over Him. ... Notice verse 11: “even so, consider yourselves to be dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.”



What's Paul saying? Listen carefully. This is so profound, but it is so crucial. This is what Paul is praying we'll understand. When Christ died on the cross, if you're a believer in Jesus Christ, then there is a sense in which you died with Him. Your old self, who you used to be, died in Christ. And when Christ was buried, who you used to be was buried with Him, in the mind of God. And when Christ was raised from the dead, you were raised in a new life just as He was raised to new life. And when Christ was seated at the right hand of God, you were seated in heaven with Christ. In the mind of God, it is done. It's a reality.

And someday it will actually happen, but for today, the reality is this: you no longer have to be the slave of sin. It's been defeated in your life. God's power that He used to raise Jesus and seat Him at the right hand, in the heavenlies, He's used in you to raise you from who you used to be to a new life, and to give you the great privilege of belonging to Him. That's the implication of the fact that God exerted His power to raise Jesus and seat Him at His right hand. He has used that same power to give you new life and to seat you, as it were, with Him in glory. We don't sit at God's right hand, that's the place of honor reserved for Christ, but we are seated in the heavenlies with Christ.

There's another implication, by the way, of the fact that Christ has routed all of Satan's kingdom, that God has exercised that power in Christ. It's that we don't live under the dominion of Satan. I throw this in just as a side point because there are so many Christians who live in terror and fear of Satan and his demons. They're always afraid that Satan's doing something to them that God really isn't controlling. Listen, as Luther said, the devil is God's devil. He has him on a leash. He will only go as far as God allows him. When God raised up Christ and seated Him in the heavenlies, He seated Him as superior to all of those forces. He controls them all. "The prince of darkness grim. We tremble not for him. His rage we can endure. For lo, his doom is sure. One little word shall fell him."

So, the first example that Paul gives us of God's power is the power that He exerted in Christ in His resurrection and in His ascension. The second example comes in the first part of verse 22, the subjection of everything to Jesus Christ. Look at verse 22. "And He put all things in subjection under His feet,"

Paul is borrowing this idea from Psalm 8:6-8. If we were to go back, and we won't do this because of time, but if we were to go back to Psalm 8, you would see that in its context, it's talking about human beings. God made man, Adam, to have dominion over everything on the earth. He subjected all things to mankind, but as you know, Adam sinned, and he plunged the

entire human race into sin. And so, the writer of Hebrews takes that same Psalm, and he says, man failed. All things are not subjected to us. It's out of control. It's not under our control, it's out of our control. But he says it's really fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

The last Adam, Christ, has been given control again of everything that came out of control because of the first Adam's sin. He's put it in subjection to Christ. Notice verse 22. "He put in subjection." The Greek verb that's translated that way literally means "to arrange under," or to subordinate. The word literally means "to order oneself under a leader." It's what you do if you're in the military. Some of you have served in the military. All of us have been exposed to that in some way or other. You understand that a private, for example, subordinates himself, puts himself under, the leader that's over him.

But the picture here is not voluntary subordination. It's not the picture of someone who willingly subordinates his will to a commanding officer. Instead, the picture here is of a victorious general. Notice the description. He put all things in subjection under His feet. That's a very interesting picture, under His feet. That's a picture of a victorious general who has triumphed over his enemies. If you're familiar with the Old Testament you remember the story in Joshua's time, in Joshua 10:24, how Joshua defeated five powerful Amorite kings. And after they defeated those kings, Joshua brought those five kings, made them kneel on the ground in front of his warriors, and then he had his generals each come by in turn and put their foot on the neck of those kings. It was the demonstration of their subjection of them, their defeat of them. Your life and everything about you lies in my power.

What is under Christ's feet? Well, look back at verse 22, all things. He subjected under his feet all things. What Paul is saying is that literally everything in the universe, without exception, is right now under Christ's foot, under His control. He has the right to dispose of it however He chooses. Have you ever thought about this? That today, as we sit here in this auditorium this morning, every creature in the universe, every person here either willingly bows and subjects himself to Jesus Christ, or it's as if Christ has His foot on their neck, with the right to dispose of them in any way He chooses. All things are under His feet. Armitage Robinson writes, "Above all that anywhere is, anywhere can be, above all grades of dignity real or imagined, good or evil, present or to come, the mighty power of God has exalted and enthroned Jesus Christ."

So, how does this apply to us? Well, first and foremost it applies in our salvation, doesn't it? Because we were rebels against God. We were not under the control of God, and yet God graciously brought us under Christ. He subjected our wills to Christ, and we cried out to Him

and have submitted ourselves to Him. But now that we're Christians, how does this aspect of God's power that subjected everything to Christ apply to us? Well, He gives us a hint into it in 1 Corinthians 15. Turn there for a moment. First Corinthians 15. Paul uses this same expression from Psalm 8. You remember the context of 1 Corinthians 15 is about the resurrection. Because Christ has been raised, we too will be raised. Notice what he says in verse 25 of 1 Corinthians 15.

For He [that is Christ] must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet.”  
[He is now over everything, but He hasn't yet fully exerted that authority.  
Everything belongs to Him, and someday He will come back and seize what  
belongs to Him.] “The last enemy [verse 26] that will be abolished is death” [And  
then he quotes Psalm 8] “FOR HE HAS PUT ALL THINGS IN SUBJECTION UNDER  
HIS FEET.

He's talking about death. He's talking about physical death. Turn over to Philippians 3 and you see this clearer. Philippians 3:20. It says as believers,

“... our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior,  
the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform the body of our humble state into  
conformity with the body of His glory” [We get a glorified body. And how does  
He do this? Look at the end of verse 21.] “by the exertion of the power that He  
has even to subject all things to Himself.”

One of the chief enemies to us, to our souls, we studied last week, is our flesh. Our flesh remains with us. It's one of our chief enemies, and while it's not our physical bodies, it's base of operation is in our physical body, our unredeemed bodies. And by the same power God used to subject all things to Himself, that He gave to Christ, He will transform our bodies. This gives us great hope, folks. Because Christ is over everything. Because everything in the universe has been subjected to Christ.

As Hendricksen says, “nothing can prevent the realization of the believer's hope. Not death, not the flesh, nothing can stand in the way of what God has promised us.” We get heaven. We get glorification. We get a new body. We get to be like Jesus Christ. And it will happen because the power that's at work within us is the same power that God used to subject everything in the universe to Jesus Christ. So, what is going to stand in the way of it happening?

Paul uses one last example of God's power: the connection of the church to Jesus Christ. Look at the second half of Ephesians 1:22. And ... [God] "gave Him [that is Christ] as head over all things to the church. God has given Christ as the head of the church. Christ is the head. Verse 23 says we are the body. The church is the body. Now, this image of Christ as the head and we as the body originated with Paul. We don't know where or when, possibly on the road to Damascus, when Christ spoke to him from heaven and said, "why are you persecuting Me," when in fact, he'd been persecuting believers. Maybe from that as he thought about that, this concept of Christ as the head and we as the body originated. We don't know.

But there are several lessons from this image of Christ as the head, two specifically. One is that Christ is Lord. It speaks of Lordship. Our heads, your physical head directs the rest of your body. Your brain sends messages and tells every part of your body what to do. The same is true in the spiritual world. Christ is the head of His church. God made Him to be the master, the sovereign, the Lord, the director of all things.

But there's a second reality behind this picture, and that's not only Lordship, but union. Our physical heads, your physical head is solidly and vitally and permanently connected to your body. Whatever happens to our heads, happens to the rest of our bodies. Wherever our heads go, our bodies follow, and nothing can happen to our bodies without affecting our heads. Here's the amazing point Paul is making. Christ says that if you want to understand just how close He is to you, this is Christ now using this image, if you want to understand how close Christ is to you, then just think of yourself as part of His body, and He as the head. Incredible.

But Paul applies this for us, this image of Christ as head, and we as the body, in verse 23. He makes the point in this last verse of his prayer. He says the church is, "His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all." Now the last part of that's clear. Let's start there. Christ fills all in all. In other words, Christ pervades all things, He rules all things, He sustains all things, He directs all things, He accomplishes all of His purposes. He fills all in all.

But what does the first part of verse 23 mean? The church is the fullness of Christ. It's one of the most difficult verses in the entire book to interpret. But most likely, Paul is saying that the church in some way completes Jesus Christ. Now, we don't usually think that way. We wouldn't think that way if it weren't inspired for us here.

Listen to William Hendriksen, the great commentator. He says, "As to His divine essence, Christ in no sense whatever is dependent on or capable of being completed by the church."

When we're talking about Christ as God, He doesn't need us to complete Him. But, Hendriksen said "as the bridegroom," which is how He's pictured in Scripture, "He is incomplete without the bride. As the vine, He cannot be thought of without the branches. As the shepherd, He is not seen without His sheep, and so also, as the head, He finds His full expression in His body, the church"

John Calvin writes of this amazing reality, "This is the highest honor of the church that unless He is united to us, the Son of God reckons Himself in some measure imperfect, or incomplete." What an encouragement it is for us to hear that not until He has us as one with Himself is he complete in all His parts, or does He wish to be regarded as whole. Jesus Christ has chosen to think of Himself as incomplete without us. How could our future be more assured than this? The One who sits at God's right hand, the eternal Son of God, to Whom everything in the universe has been subjected, will not allow Himself to be complete without you being perfected and in His presence.

As you sit here this morning you may feel weak, spiritually weak. You may feel easily defeated. You may wonder, how will I ever make it? Listen, if you're a genuine believer, it's not up to you. God's power saves you, and God's power is at work in you even now. The same power that God used to raise Jesus from the dead and set Him at His right hand, the same power He used to subject everything in the universe to Christ, and the same power that He used to connect Christ to the church as its head is at work in you at this very moment. We need to pray that we will grow in our understanding of the greatness of God's power at work in us.

I hope you've seen over the last few weeks how important illumination is to our spiritual growth. But as we complete our study of this prayer, we need to ask ourselves one crucial question. If illumination is so crucial, then how does it occur? What are the tools the Spirit uses to actually accomplish this sort of new and living insight into Scripture in our hearts. Let me briefly give you three tools that the Spirit uses. I want you to think about this this week, pray about this, reflect on this. These are the tools the Spirit uses.

Number one: intake of the Word of God. What the Spirit illumines is our understanding of the Scripture. So, without the Scripture, there is no illumination. We need to hear it read. We need to read it ourselves. We need to study it. We need to hear it taught, like you're doing this morning. Listen, beloved, listen to me. There is nothing more crucial to your spiritual life and growth than daily intake of the Word of God. You will not, you cannot grow without it.

A second primary tool the Spirit uses in illumination is, not only intake of the Word of God, but “meditation on the Scripture,” meditation on the Scripture. You remember Joshua 1:8, that great verse where he tells the leader of his people.... Joshua is 90 years old, studied under Moses for 40 years, and God tells Joshua, listen, I want you not to let this book of the law depart out of your mouth. In other words, I want you to read it, and I want you to meditate in it day and night so that you may be careful to do it. Psalm 1:2, speaking of the righteous man says, the righteous man’s “delight is in the law of the Lord, And in His law he [what?] meditates day and night.” You must not only take in the Word of God, you must think deeply about it.

The third tool the Spirit uses for illumination is prayer, prayer. This last tool is crucial because illumination is not something you can produce in your own heart. It is a work of God. It is a work of the Spirit. So, we read, and we study, and we hear the word taught, and we meditate, and we think deeply about what we’ve learned, but all of that is pointless if we don’t pray. That’s why Paul’s prayer for the Ephesians is for their spiritual illumination, and if you want to grow spiritually, then you must pray too for illumination, both for yourself and for others. Paul’s prayer is not that the Ephesians would receive any more additional resources. Instead, his prayer is that they’ll come to a greater understanding of the resources that they have.

We began by asking the question: What do you pray for the Christian who has everything? That’s described in verses 3 through 14 of chapter 1. What do you pray for somebody like that? You pray that they will fully come to grasp what they have in Christ. Our greatest need is not some additional resource, but to understand what God has already done for us in Jesus Christ. And we will understand that through intake of the Word of God, meditation on the Word of God, and prayer that God, through the Spirit would open our minds and grasp us, and cause us to grasp the truth.

Let’s pray together.

Father, thank You for these three powerful examples of Your great power that is at work within us. Father, we thank You that You have and will work in us to make us like Your Son. And Lord, we join our voices with Paul this morning, and we pray that You would give us the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Yourself, as well as in the knowledge of Your blessings.

Lord, enlighten our eyes to understand what is the hope of Your calling on us, that we are the riches of Your inheritance, that we are Your treasured possession. And Father, help us to

understand the power that is currently at work in us and will present us blameless before Your presence with exceeding joy.

Father, may these truths grip our hearts, change our thinking, change our very lives.

We pray in Jesus' name and for His sake. Amen.