

## **Sermon Podcast 915.MP3**

**0:09**

There really is something about when you sing the words of Jesus and you let those words wash over you that God will provide, that God is there for us. And everything we need, God has taken care of. To know that is true and to not only know it with your mind, but to know it from the depths of your soul. Yo. There's something powerful about that.

**0:28**

So, if you're here this morning for the first time, great time for you to join us. We are in week 2 of a new series where we are going through the book of Ephesians, Paul's letter to the church, not just one church, but as we talked about last week, a circular, letter, which means it goes to a number of churches around a region. And so Paul is writing this letter as we said last week from prison, and yet this letter y'all is filled with joy and goodness and hope for all of us. And so if you got your Bibles, turn to Ephesians chapter 1. We're gonna read verses 15 through 23.

**1:03**

And y'all, this week is the last week we're really gonna kinda break chapters into 2 pieces. Starting next week, what we're gonna do is take each chapter at a run, but it is really important as we kick off this series that we know the heart of where Paul is coming from. In chapter 1, as we talked about last week and this week as well, kinda lay out for us the grand vision for Paul and his view of the church and of Jesus. And so we have to spend time talking about that. So Ephesians chapter 1 verses 15 through 23, and I will begin reading now.

**1:35**

Here's what Paul says to the church then, but also to the church here today. Because of all this and because I'd heard that you are loyal and faithful to Jesus, the master, and that you show love to all God's holy people, I never stop giving thanks for you as I remember you in my prayers. I pray that the God of King Jesus, our Lord, the father of glory, would give you and your spirit the gift of being wise, of seeing things that people can't normally see because you are coming to know him and to have the eyes of

your inmost self open to God's light. And then you will know exactly what the hope is that goes with God's call. You will know the wealth of the glory of his inheritance in his holy people.

**2:20**

And you will know the outstanding greatness of his power toward us who are loyal to him in faith according to the working of his strength and power. This was the power at work in the king when God raised him from the dead and sat him at his right hand in the heavenly places above all rule and authority and power and lordship and above every name that is invoked both in the present age and also in the age to come. Yes. God has put all things under his feet and has given him to the church as the head overall. The church is his body.

**2:58**

It is the fullness of the one who fills all in all. So you guys on on Friday, I've got a routine. Friday is my off day. And so, go grocery shopping like I've talked to you about before. I go to Publix.

**3:10**

But then every once in a while, I go to, my second favorite place to go on Friday, which is Costco. Do I have any other Costco people? I would go to when I'm looking to do something fun, you know, I go to Costco because, apparently, that's what 41 year old men do for fun. Right? And I go to Costco on Friday, and I'm getting ready to grocery shop.

**3:29**

And I see somebody I know, and I see this person, and beside them is their young kid. And their kid, you guys, is decked out. I know it's Friday and the game's on Saturday, and we won by the skin of our teeth. But by us, I mean Georgia, the only team you really ought to care about. And on Friday, you guys, I see this little boy in Costco with his dad, and he is wearing an Etienne jersey.

**3:50**

If you don't know who that is, he is the maybe the best running back in the country, and he is on our team. And so I I got down on my knee when I talked to the little kids. He's probably 8 years

old. And I said, bud, I am so excited that you're wearing that jersey. Are you a Bulldog fan?

**4:03**

And he looked at me and he said, I'm the biggest bulldog fan. He said, did you know did you know that when I grow up I'm gonna be better than Travis Etienne? I'm gonna be a running back for the Georgia bulldogs. And I looked at this little guy, and I said, buddy, that is fantastic. And then I looked at his dad who stands approximately 5 foot 4 and a £195, and I thought y'all, that's probably not gonna happen, is it?

**4:31**

But I looked at my little friend, and I said, that is so good for you because we wanna encourage kids in their dreams, but y'all, there comes a certain point in our lives where that isn't the case anymore. Right? I think about myself. When I was in high school, a really good athlete. I was a good athlete, and in particular, I was good at football.

**4:48**

And I always thought that I was gonna go to a major division 1 college to play football. And and I'm I was encouraged in that from the time I was a kid, started playing when I was 6 all the way through 18. But when I was 17, I started having a little trouble with my grades because I was spending too much time playing sports. And I will never forget it that my dad sat me down and he said, Will, I need to have an honest conversation with you right now. And I'm thinking, okay dad, what do you want to talk about?

**5:18**

With these scholarship offers that are not coming in yet, but I know they're going to at some point. And dad looks at me and he says, Will, you need to know through a confluence of events that are related to your genetic makeup, but also just raw athletic ability, you're not gonna be a professional football player. You need to know that. Okay? And I was like, dad, are you serious right now?

**5:40**

But it turns out, he was right. Because at some point, while we

want to encourage kids in their dreams, at some point, we have to be real about our lives, and as a culture and as people, a general rule is that at some point, we have to be realistic. We have to be realistic about who we are as individuals. We have to be realistic about who we are collectively as people. And I talk about the need to be realistic because as we read through Paul's letter to the church at Ephesus, if we're not careful, we can find ourselves buying in to the same sort of rhetoric about what it means to be realistic.

#### **6:20**

And we'll come back to that in just a few moments. But I wanna remind you what's going on in this letter that that Paul is writing. As I said, it's not just to 1 church, but it is to a collection of churches. And Paul, in the first, first 13 verses that we read last week, what Paul is doing is he is laying out this grand, beautiful prayer to God the father. The first thing Paul does is he says we need to give thanks to God.

#### **6:46**

I didn't tell you this last week, but verses 1 through 13, it is actually just one long sentence. It's just one long sentence because he's so excited about giving glory and thanksgiving to God. But what I read for us this morning, the second section of chapter 1, he's shifting gears, and now he's not necessarily giving thanks to God, although God is always present. And now what Paul is doing is he's turning his attention to the church. And I love what Paul does because, again, he's writing to churches, some of whom he has met, but but often some of them that he has never met before.

#### **7:18**

And remember, the church in the 1st century in Ephesus and in the Asia region, it would have been no more than 10, 15 people who would have gathered in these small houses. Most of them would have been poor. A majority of them, in fact, would have been women. There might have been some wealthy influential people. But for the most part, the church was a ragtag collection of folks from all across the Mediterranean world.

#### **7:42**

And Paul writes to them and he says, hey, first off, I want to give thanks. I wanna give thanks to you church because I have heard of your loyalty and your faithfulness to Jesus. I've heard of your loyalty and your faithfulness to Jesus, and I have heard of your great love for all of God's people. Now now when I read that, you guys, I actually have to stop for just a few minutes. And I wonder, and I think you might wonder too, what difference would it make in 2,024 if when people thought of the church, the first thing they thought of wasn't political affiliation, it wasn't division or scandal, but what difference would it make if when people thought of the church in 2024, the first thing that came to their mind was loyalty and faithfulness to Jesus and love for all of God's people.

**8:40**

I'm telling you right now, if we could reclaim that definition of what it means to be church, And listen, it is not easy to do that because it takes hard work and dedication, but it is worth it. And I'm telling you, if we can be known as people who are first and foremost loyal and faithful to Jesus and we love all people, then the church, as it was in the 1st century, will be an unstoppable force for the goodness of God in the world. And so Paul says, first off, I wanna give thanks to you for all that you've done and who that you are, and then he kinda lays out for the church. This is my prayer for you. This is my prayer for you.

**9:17**

I want you to be wise. I want you to be given the gift of wisdom. And real quick, I'm not gonna sit on this for long, but listen to me y'all. There is a fundamental difference between intelligence and wisdom. Wisdom is a gift that comes from God.

**9:32**

And Paul says, I pray that you will be wise, and I pray that you will have the eyes of your innermost self opened. I pray that you will be able to see things that people cannot normally see, and then he goes on to say, ultimately, what his prayer is about. I'm praying for you. I'm thankful to God for you, and ultimately, y'all, here's what Paul says. The hope for the church, according to Paul, is that they might know one thing and one thing beyond the shadow of a doubt.

**10:02**

And here's what it is, that the crucified, resurrected, and ascended Jesus Christ is currently right now ruling over all of creation. Paul says, I give thanks to you. You are loyal and you're faithful to Jesus, and here's what I pray for you. That as you move into the future, that beyond any shadow of a doubt, you would remember this one central claim. That the crucified, resurrected, and ascended Jesus is the one who is currently right now in the present moment ruling over all of creation.

**10:40**

What we talked about last week in chapter 1 verse 10, that God's plan was to sum up the whole of the cosmos, heaven and earth in king Jesus. And so Paul says, this is my prayer for you that you will know the power and the strength of God. That there is one who currently right now in the present moment is directing the course of human history. For so many people, we think we've been conditioned to think that heaven is a different sort of space. Earth is here.

**11:12**

Heaven is there, and there's a deep chasm and separation. But here's what I want us to understand, that according to Jesus and according to biblical thought, that heaven is the CEO's office. Heaven is the place where Jesus issues the directives for the world to be transformed. And Paul says in verse 23 that Jesus is seated at the right hand of God, and he is over all powers both in the present and in the future. Paul says, I want you to know that the crucified, resurrected and ascended Jesus is currently ruling over all things.

**11:48**

And that's precisely the moment, you guys, where we need to be careful. Because if we are not paying attention to what Paul says, it is so incredibly easy for us to get wrapped into the idea that I spoke about earlier. Yeah. Let's get real. Because if we pay attention to the culture in which we were raised, right, we are all children of the enlightenment.

**12:11**

We're children of the enlightenment. I'm not gonna nerd out

philosophically on it, but, basically, here's what that means. Unless we can see it, unless we can test it, unless we can make hypothesis and prove it to be true through the scientific method, then we can write it off as false. And the last time I checked, we don't see Jesus running the world day to day, do we? And the last time I checked, culture would say to us, you're making claims about Jesus who is ruling over all things.

**12:37**

What they would say and and and what we are tempted to hear is open your eyes. Open your eyes and see. See just how broken the world is. See just how chaotic things are outside. Matter of fact, some people might even say, look how chaotic things are inside of the church itself.

**12:57**

Get real, some people would say. And it's tempting to buy into that narrative. It's it's it's tempting to let us believe those fairy tales when we're kids, that Jesus, the Lord, actually will provide, but some people say it's time to get real. And I wish it was true just outside. But for so many people, even in the church, what we have been conditioned to think is that when we we we when we read Paul's prayer, we think the same thing, get real.

**13:25**

How many of us were taught Jesus was crucified, and on the 3rd day he arose from the tomb, and he ascended to heaven, and one day he's gonna come back, but until then, good luck. And until then, do the best you can with what you've got, but ultimately nothing is gonna get better until the day when Jesus returns. And we buy into the same narrative. We are comfortable with Jesus saying, I've got all things under my control in heaven. But when we talk about the the claims that Paul is making, every power and authority is under his foot right here and right now.

**14:05**

And the crucified, resurrected and ascended Jesus is ruling over all things. If we're willing to be honest and if we're willing to look deep inside of our own selves, I think for many of us even here in the church, when we read Paul's prayer in this section, we are tempted to think, yeah, get real. And that's why it is so important

for us to remember that the truth of who we are is not to be found from what culture says. The truth about reality is ultimately not to be found in textbooks of academia. But as we seek to know who we are, as we seek to know whose we are, as we want to know and understand what God's plan for the cosmos ultimately is, there is one place where we look, and it is from Paul, and it is from Jesus himself.

**14:56**

And if we take Paul seriously and if we let his words actually shape our lives, then we will understand however easy it might be to look at the state of the world and say, get real. If we actually believe what Paul says, then there is something that is taking place through the crucified and resurrected one. That the restoration of all things is at hand, and that this world is not to be written off, but the God who created it and said it is very good is right now in the current moment in the process of making things right. And he is doing it, Paul says, through me and through you. It is a bold and grand vision, and it is so important that we grasp the full potential and strength of what Paul is ultimately saying.

**15:49**

I pray that your eyes will be opened, so that you can see things that most people can't naturally see. I pray that your eyes of your inmost self might be open so that you can see the fullness of God's light. Essentially, you guys, what Paul is saying is my prayer for you is that you would be wise, that you would hear what Jesus says, and you would believe it to be true. Y'all make no mistake about it. Paul isn't the only one who says Jesus is ruling over all things.

**16:22**

I want you to think about this. Right? What does Jesus say? Jesus himself, after he is resurrected on Easter Sunday morning, he spends 40 days with the disciples and the apostles. And then as he ascends to the father in Matthew chapter 28, what we've all been taught, if you grew up in church, and I didn't, so no shame in that game if you didn't grow up in church.

**16:43**

But if you did, undoubtedly, you would have heard in Matthew 28,



go into all the nations and and teach them everything I've obeyed everything that I've taught you, and baptize them in the name of the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit. And we know that as the Great Commission. But what Jesus says directly before the Great Commission is really, really important for us to understand because the resurrected one, who's about to be seated at the right hand of the father in the CEO's office, do you know what he says? I have conquered death. And listen, all authority in heaven, which we are fine with as Christians.

**17:20**

Right? All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Jesus. And if that is the case, then we are called to go out into the world and to represent Him understanding that that is in fact true. Because listen, either everything Jesus said is true or nothing Jesus said is true. And those words coming directly from his mouth, all authority in heaven and on earth.

**17:50**

And Paul says, I pray that your eyes would be opened and so that you could see things people naturally can't see. Paul is one of those guys that is super conversant and he knows all the stories of the old testament because it's not only the story of the Jewish people, but it is the story of Jesus people. And there's a story in 2nd Kings that I actually believe Paul is referencing. You got there's this guy named Elisha, and Elisha is one of the great prophets of the old testament. He does these incredible things, and there's a story in 2nd Kings chapter 6.

**18:22**

If you just wanna read some fascinating narrative, go and read the books of 1st, 2nd Kings, 1st, 2nd Chronicles. And in the story in 2nd king 2nd Kings chapter 6, Elisha the prophet has gotten himself in some trouble. And there's a local king who's decided he wants Elisha to be dead. And so Elisha and his servant, in the story in 2nd Kings 6, wake up one morning only to find that they have been surrounded and encircled by the by the chariots and the warriors of king of the king of Aram. And and the servant of Elisha is absolutely freaking out.

**18:59**

He he knows this is gonna be the end of our life. And so he looks to Elisha, and he says, we are outnumbered and look outside. They are all around us. And what are we gonna do? Because this is gonna be the end of our story.

### 19:12

And in 2nd Kings chapter 6, y'all, Elisha looks at his servant, and he prays a prayer to God. And you know what he says? God, open his eyes so that he might see things as they really are. And he says to his servant, there's nothing to be afraid of. And in that moment, y'all, the eyes of Elisha's servant are opened up and he sees the angels and the chariots of fire, the chariots of God all around, and he knows that we in fact have nothing to be afraid of.

### 19:47

Paul says, my prayer for you is that the eyes of your inmost self might be opened So that you might see the world as it truly is. So that you might see things that don't come naturally in this fallen and broken world. Y'all, according to Paul, if Jesus is in control, then there is absolutely nothing for us to be afraid of. And what I want us to understand this morning, no matter where you find yourself in this journey of life, that just like Elisha's servants, that we are invited to see things people can't normally see. We are invited to have the eyes of our inmost self open to God's light.

### 20:31

And yes, we live in a world that says to these bold claims of faith, get real because it can't be true. But those of us who have experienced the crucified and resurrected Jesus in our own lives, Paul's prayer is that your eyes would be opened and you could see. That not only could you see and grasp it mentally, but more importantly, you could internalize it in the state of your life. Y'all please hear me out this morning. That far too many people, far too many people that claim the name of Jesus Christ.

### 21:05

Do you know what we've done? We've settled. Far too many people have settled for a version of Christianity that makes no practical difference in our day to day lives. Far too many people have said, okay, the sum goal of faith is to bow my head, say a prayer to admit I'm a sinner so I can go to heaven one day when I

die. And listen, that's better than nothing.

### 21:29

But that in fact, if we are taking Jesus and Paul's letter to the church at Ephesus seriously, y'all that is a caricature of what Jesus intends for the church. Jesus intends for the church through the power of God to be this revolutionary force for good because we have been transformed. Not just when we die, but right here in the present moment. You guys, we have an opportunity to live the life of Jesus right here and right now. To be filled with the fruit of the spirit and embody a different and better sort of way in the world.

### 22:11

And don't we all want that for ourselves? Paul says, you can have it. You can have it because Jesus Jesus is the one who has taken on your sin, and we have been adopted as sons and daughters through his blood which was shed on the cross that we have been invited into the fullness of God's great cosmic story in and through Jesus. Because ultimately he is the one listen, this is so important. He is the one who has all the power.

### 22:43

And in that great verse, I wanna read it to you. Right? I wanna read it and translate it directly from the Greek. I believe it's verse 8 18 or 19. Here's what Paul says.

### 22:52

My prayer for you is that you may know the surpassing greatness. Just listen to the way he rattles this off, literally translated from the Greek. That you may know the surpassing greatness of his power for those of us who believe according to the energy of the might of his strength, which he worked out in the Messiah. According to the energy of the might of his strength that is worked out in the Messiah. What Paul is saying is there is somebody who has power and his name is Jesus.

### 23:24

There is somebody that can transform your life and his name is Jesus. The energy of the might of his power can be at work in you. Paul's writing to the church at Ephesus. And Ephesus,

remember, is a major Roman colony. And around the time that Paul is writing, there began to be, the worship of the imperial cult because there was one person on earth who was considered to be the most powerful.

**23:50**

Do you know who it was? It was Caesar. Around the time of Paul, it would have been Nero. And everybody would have worshiped Caesar because he's the one that had power. And everybody would have worshiped Artemis of the Ephesians because she was a God who had power.

**24:07**

And Paul is writing to a world that is obsessed with power and influence, and he would have said, bank your life, not on Caesar. Bank your life, not on an idol, but bank your life on Jesus because the energy of the might of his strength is at work in you. And we are living in a world that is equally obsessed with power. And we might not use that language, but many of us think if I can just get more money, if I can just get more influence on social media, if I can just get a little more safety and security in my job status, then I will have everything I need, then I will have authority, then I will have power, then I will have control. And what Paul is saying is that you are invited to trust something way more secure.

**24:58**

You're invited to trust something that not even death can defeat. You're invited to trust Jesus. And his prayer for the church is that our eyes would be opened and that we could be given the gift of wisdom because there is someone who is ruling over all things, and his name is Jesus. And y'all, this is where this prayer takes an incredible turn, and this is what I wanna focus on for the next, like, 5 to 7 minutes. Because ultimately, you guys, everything that Paul is saying revolves around one central theme and it is this, the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

**25:33**

If Jesus walked out of the tomb on Easter Sunday morning, then listen to me. The world is a fundamentally different place. If Jesus Christ walked out of the tomb on Easter Sunday morning, then your life can be a fundamentally different life. Paul says the

energy of the power that is at work in Jesus can be at work in you. In that beautiful crescendo, the culmination of his prayer for the church, he says, here's what I want you to know, that that power, the same power of God that raised Jesus from the dead is the same power that is at work in you.

### **26:18**

And I swear some of you are sitting there right now thinking, yeah. Right. Get real. But I want you to know that if we take what Jesus says seriously, the very same power of God that brought Jesus up out of that tomb on Easter Sunday morning, that power is accessible to you right now in the present moment. And friends, if that is true, and I hope that you can trust that it is, then your life can be absolutely and fundamentally different.

### **26:56**

The the great South African missiologist, Leslie Newbigin, somebody asked him once about the state of the world. They said, Professor Newbigin, there's a lot of chaos going on out there, and we need to know what is your projection for the future? Are you a pessimist or are you an optimist? And in a line that I absolutely love, Newbigin looks at his questioner and he says this, that I am neither a pessimist nor an optimist because Jesus Christ is risen from the dead. Our lives can be transformed because Paul says the energy of the power of his might, the same power of God that raised Jesus from the dead is at work in you.

### **27:40**

And what does that change? Friends, it changes everything. And I want you to know this morning that how is it gonna manifest itself? How is it gonna show itself in your life? And y'all listen.

### **27:53**

It might show itself in grand and glorious ways. You might go out of here and do something remarkable, and it's through the power of God. But the same power of God that raised Jesus from the dead and the same power that is at work in your life, do you know how it's gonna be made known? Through a life that is filled with a little more generosity. The power of God that raised Jesus from the dead, it's the same power, listen to me, that will say deep inside of your heart, you don't need to take that drink in order to

be fulfilled.

### **28:30**

It is the same power of God that raised Jesus from the dead that will say to you in a world of anger and in a world of cynicism, you get to be a person of hope. It is the same power of God that raised Jesus from the dead and is at work in your life that says, even if the diagnosis is one you never imagined you would get, it doesn't define your story. And if we believe that that is true, friends, then we can live with freedom. Because remember what I said last week, we are in Christ. And what is true of him, y'all, it is true of us.

### **29:15**

And so I wanna ask you a simple question this morning because the goal is to be personal and the goal is to be real about where you are. And so what are the issues that you're dealing with in your own life? What are the issues that you are struggling with? Self worth? Addiction?

### **29:38**

Depression, extreme anxiety at the politicization of our age. What are the things that you're dealing with? And today, listen, you are invited to trust that you can overcome those giants. Today, you are invited to trust that there is a better way forward because if Jesus Christ is resurrected from the dead, then the same energy of the power of His might that walked that caused Him to walk out of that tomb on Sunday morning is at work in your life. I know.

### **30:15**

I know it is so easy to hear what I'm saying to you and to say, we'll get real. But if you are willing to hear what Jesus teaches, if you are willing to hear what Paul declares to be true, friends, your life can be changed and you can be revolutionally transformed by the goodness and the grace of God. So in a world of cynicism, may we never say get real, But in a world of resurrection, may we remember that what is true of Him is true of us. And the same power of God that raised Jesus from the dead can transform your life right here and right now. And for that, we really give thanks to God.

**31:07**

Join me for a few moments y'all and let's pray together. Lord, right now I wanna pray for my friends and at least one person, if not most of us, god, even myself. When I hear these words of Paul, my gut inclination is to say get real. But, Lord, help us to trust a story that is truer than we could ever imagine. Help us to trust a story that is more beautiful than anything we could have ever dreamed of.

**31:36**

That, Lord, what is true of Jesus is true of us. Help us to know, God, that the same power of God that raised Jesus on Sunday morning is at work in us and through us. Lord, for my friends who are here this morning here in the room watching online, some of us are struggling. And Lord, the demons we battle and the battles we face can seem so overwhelming, but God this morning help us to trust that you are in us, that you are working through us, and God if we can put our hope in you then our lives can be transformed. Lord may that power, the very power of God reside in our hearts so that we might be your people.

**32:19**

Help us to trust you this morning. Lord, be with us as we continue to worship and celebrate the goodness of your name. And it is in the name of Jesus that we pray. Amen.