

A Prayer for All Your Tomorrows

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[0 : 00] The following message is given by Walt Alexander, lead pastor of Trinity Grace Church in Athens, Tennessee. For more information about Trinity Grace, please visit us at TrinityGraceAthens.com.

Ephesians chapter 1, beginning in verse 15. 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 a 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 has called you. What are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints?

And what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward 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 authority and power and dominion and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

[1 : 53] This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. One question that has continually perplexed believers throughout the ages is, if God is sovereign, why preach or pray?

If all things are already planned or predestined, do our prayers even matter? On March 11, 1779, a beautiful yet quite humorous poem appeared in the Continental Journal of the United States. It says, and I read, If all things succeed as already agreed, an immutable, unchangeable impulse is rule us. To preach and to pray is but time thrown away, and our teachers do nothing but fool us. But if by free will we can go or stand still as best suits the present occasion, then fill up the glass and confirm him a donkey. That depends upon predestination.

Kind of capturing some of that dilemma, right? If all things already are planned, then what's the point of all this stuff? Well, two weeks later in the same newspaper, another poem was submitted.

[3 : 10] It reads, If an all-perfect mind rules over mankind with infinite wisdom and power, sure he may decree, and yet the will be free, the deeds and events of each hour.

If all things advance, rather, with the force of mere chance, or a human free will are directed to preach and to pray, will be time thrown away, our teachers may well be rejected.

The answer, I think, gets it right. You know, if all things advance by chance or by mere human free will alone, then preaching and praying is time thrown away, for it's all just a roll of the dice.

But if all things are governed by a God who's infinite with wisdom and power, then all things are planned, and yet the choices are real and matter. That's the way the Bible presents this relationship between God's sovereignty and human responsibility all throughout the Scriptures.

We've been talking quite a bit about these categories generally as we've gone through this letter.

But the Bible says again and again that God is absolutely sovereign, and yet human beings are not pawns or puppets.

[4 : 28] God does not make people believe or not believe or any of these things. Their choices are real, and yet human beings, the Bible also says human beings are completely responsible.

They choose, they believe, they disobey, they respond, and their decisions and actions have consequences and yet never diminish the sovereignty of God. So these things in so many ways are what help hold so much of the Bible together, this absolute sovereignty of God, yet in a way that doesn't make us pawns, and yet the responsibility of man to respond to the gospel and being held accountable for how he responds.

Now how they fit together, how can these two things be true, is indeed a mystery, perhaps most especially in prayer. In our passage this morning, the Apostle Paul gives thanks for the church in Ephesus and tells them how he's praying.

If you remember right at the beginning, he said, for this reason I'm praying. So for this reason, he's pointing back to every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places that is ours in Christ.

He says, I'm praying for this reason. But not merely that these spiritual blessings have arrived, but how they have arrived, that they've arrived by the careful planning and sovereign work of God.

[5 : 54] And so he's responding to all that God has done in sovereign grace in the work of Jesus Christ, and he's responding by praying. Precisely the thing that we think doesn't make sense, in light of the sovereignty of God, he begins to pray to give thanks and prayer, the careful planning and sovereign work of God.

Doesn't empty prayer of its meaning or rob it of its power. It fills it with significance and urgency for the Apostle. He prays continually for the people of Ephesus to see clearly all that lies ahead of them in the future because of what God has done for them in Christ.

He knows they will not persevere in hope unless these things are rooted in them. They will not remain faithful in an ungodly culture.

He knows they will not see the things they need to see unless God opens his eyes. I think in many ways this mystery in prayer works out most wonderfully.

We know all things work together according to the counsel of his will, and yet Scripture says you have not because you ask not. Dr. Piper, John Piper says, the way these things work together is God causes things to happen that do not happen if our prayers don't.

[7 : 21] Now that's quite a phrase. God causes things to happen that do not happen if our prayers don't happen. So what it means is that God in his sovereignty that rules over us in such a way that doesn't eliminate human decision and prayer and all these things, our prayers are part of what God works in working out his sovereign purposes throughout the world.

And so the Apostle commends an urgency of prayer and an appeal to God's power. And where we're going is we must continually pray, asking God to be God and do what only God can do in our hearts and lives.

We must continually pray asking God to be God and to do what only God can do in our hearts and lives. Now that statement is not meant to say that we're giving God permission to be God. No, what we're saying, we're asking God to be God, we're recognizing that he is God and responding appropriately to him, calling forth for him to do what only he can do in our hearts and lives.

That's where we're going. First point, because God is sovereign, we thank God for evidences of his grace. Because God is sovereign, we thank him for evidences of grace.

You know, in this letter, along with many other of the Apostle Paul's letter, he begins with thanksgiving. You see that for this reason, because I've heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, your love toward all the saints. I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers.

[8 : 46] On the one hand, he's talking about his prayers. He's going to pray for them in a moment, but he begins with this thanksgiving. At first, look, this looks a little odd.

I've heard of your faith. Now, if you remember, Paul planted Ephesus. He was there for the first converts. He stayed for three years. How can he say, I have heard of your faith?

Didn't he see their response of faith and repentance? Seems to me, though, Paul left Ephesus in A.D. 55.

It's now five years later, and he's in Rome, and the church has drastically changed, as we see from the letter. He was there on the first day, but now he only hears about what God is doing in Christ and the grace of God in their midst.

And I love what he says. I've heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints. In the New Testament, faith and love are often coupled together to describe the complete transformation of us in Christ.

[9 : 57] He thanks God for evidence of faith and love in numerous letters. He remarks to the Galatians that obedience to the law doesn't count for anything, but only faith working out through love.

Faith is this trust and belief in the finished work of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins. But true faith does not remain individual, private, or sentimental.

It's not all talk, as 1 John tells us. It works out, and others focus practical love toward others. And that's what the Apostle Paul hears about, and he's thrilled.

But he's not merely thrilled that faith and love are there, but that faith and love are evidence of the invasion of grace. That's what's behind the Apostle Paul's prayer.

Faith and love are evidence of conversion. They're evidence that God has acted on these individuals. God's caused them to be born again such that he says, I give thanks to God.

[11:06] He doesn't thank them. He gives thanks to God. Why? Because God is the giver of every good and perfect gift, and the giver of grace.

Now, nearly every one of Paul's letters, as I said a moment ago, begins with thanksgiving like this. One author says, Paul mentions thanksgiving more than any other Hellenistic author, pagan, or Christian.

Think about that. This word for giving thanks and its corresponding noun and objective appear 66 times in the New Testament. 75% of them are from the Apostle Paul.

Often we read these, or I read these through without paying much attention. He's giving thanks again, you know, or can think of them as merely pleasantries or courtesies, you know, before you get to the real action.

But when Paul gives thanks or encourages his readers to give thanks, he's not teaching common courtesy or proper etiquette, you know, that little blue book that your mom might have made you read.

[12:12] Not what's polite or kind. Paul's not teaching proper etiquette. He's teaching proper worship. I love this.

In each of these thanksgiving, God is at the center. Paul is teaching us the proper response to God in his saving act, is always giving thanks.

The proper response to grace is giving thanks. And that's what the Apostle does. I thank my God always for you. I thank God for what he's done in your life and the work of grace.

I wonder if there's anyone to whom we could say, I give thanks for you always. Thanksgiving for those who confess Christ is deeply important. There are a few things that come to us more naturally than complaining.

I'm a professional. You know, we're all a bit like Charlie Brown, always moping and mumbling around, moaning about how hopeless life is because of all our problems.

[13:18] It's what makes him funny. I can totally relate when Charlie Brown says, there ought to be a better way of starting the day than having to get up. Amen. Whoever invented this start, let's fire him.

But conversion brings about a great reversal. That's what it's meant to do. Bring about this great reversal from mumbling to thanksgiving, from complaining to gratefulness.

John Webster, in this wonderful quote, he says, Thanksgiving in the church of Jesus Christ is a deep reality. That just means, that's theologian's way of saying, this is serious stuff. Thanksgiving in the church of Jesus Christ is a deep reality.

It's not just a sign that Christians are a well-mannered lot who say nice things about one another or are suitably grateful to God for their blessings. No. Christian life is new life because it transforms us out of our refusal to live thankfully to a life which acknowledges, celebrates, and lives from the grace of God.

This great reversal takes place when we realize that we deserve nothing and that all that we have been given is undeserved blessings from God.

[14:30] We're living from grace. Several weeks ago, we had a marriage conference. And our friends, Gary and Betsy Raccouches, wonderful couple, godly couple, been married for 50 years, I guess.

We did a Q&A; at the end and we submitted a number of questions. Folks submitted a question. One of the questions that was asked of them is, what if all this is new?

Is there any first priority practice that we should pursue to stop the bleeding? You know, at a marriage conference, you're trying to apply the whole thing, you know? So how do we stop the bleeding?

And guess what Gary said and Betsy said? Start with what you're thankful for. Now, I was like, come on, Gary, give us something better than that, you know?

But in so many ways, is there a better start? Beloved, start with what you're thankful. This is always appropriate.

[15:30] My mom used to say, count your blessings one by one. It's always appropriate to begin with giving thanks. If you're struggling, give thanks so that you're focusing on the grace of God.

You're focusing on what God has done and intervening in your life. If you're prospering, give thanks. What did Moses say to the Israelites? He said, remember me when you get into the promised land, lest you think your own hand or your own power, your own greatness brought this about.

So we give thanks. Is there a better way to remember and celebrate the grace of God? So because God is sovereign, we thank God for evidences of grace.

Point two, because God is sovereign, we ask God to deepen our knowledge of his grace. We ask him to deepen our knowledge of his grace.

After he gives thanks for them, Paul tells the Ephesians how he has been interceding for them. Begins to tell them what he has been praying for them.

[16:31] He says he always does not cease to give thanks, remembering him in his prayers. But what has he been praying? He's been praying to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Look at verse 17. That the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory. He's been praying to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Three times already in this epistle, this letter, it says that God, it refers to God as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I love this. If you read the Genesis, you're talking about the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob. Well, the covenant name of the Lord now, forever, is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The one whom you know, you know, through Jesus Christ forever. And he prays for knowledge. Look what he says. May give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation and the knowledge of him. He's praying that we would know God deeper. But first, we must have a work of the spirit. You see that?

[17:39] He says, may God, God may give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation. Now, some translations have this, a lower caps spirit.

That might be what your translation is. In fact, this is an old copy of the ESV, and it has a lowercase spirit. The newer ESV has a lowercase spirit. So some kind of refer to it as a spirit generally, you know, in different parts of the New Testament.

It talks about a spirit of slavery or a spirit of gentleness, kind of a way of referring to something inside of us, a spirit inside of us. But it seems best to interpret this as the spirit of wisdom and of revelation.

Because of Ephesians 3 and 1 Corinthians 2, where the spirit gives revelation and wisdom. It seems that the Apostle Paul is saying he's praying to God the Father who gave our Lord Jesus Christ to give more of the spirit.

So it's a prayer for the spirit to come and do something. Now, as we studied last week, we've already been sealed with the spirit. We've been given the down payment of the spirit.

[18:51] Do we need the spirit to do anything else? Don't we have all of the spirit we need? Well, the New Testament would say, no, you don't.

We don't receive all of the benefits of the spirit in one fell swoop. Obviously, no one can confess that Jesus is Lord apart from the work of the spirit, apart from being born again.

But we need more of the spirit's wisdom and insight to understand what God has revealed. And so the Apostle Paul prays for the spirit. It's akin to a prayer for illumination.

Not that God would bring us this insight from outside. But he calls us to see the revelation that is contained in his word. And so we pray to be filled with the spirit again and again.

The spirit might enable us to understand and apply what God has revealed in Scripture. And so he says, give them a spirit of wisdom and revelation. The knowledge of him having the eyes of their hearts enlightened.

[19:52] I think this eyes of your heart is a way of understanding what he's praying for and the spirit giving wisdom and understanding. Now that's a bit of an odd phrase.

The eyes of your heart. It's common for mystics to talk about seeing with their inner eye. One Greek God tells his son to gaze with the eyes of his heart.

The idea seems to be clear enough. It's not enough to see with your head. You have to see with your heart. We need to see with our inner man.

We need to understand with our hearts. We need to taste the things of God as Psalm 34 says. We need to relish them. We need to really believe them.

The great Christian theologian Jonathan Edwards, I think, helpfully gets at this. I know it's a little bit dense. But I think it helps get at what the apostles after here.

[21 : 00] Edwards in his book, *Religious Affections*, says, Spiritual understanding consists primarily in a sense of the heart. Now that's a big phrase for Edward. In a sense of the heart.

You don't think about the heart understanding things. You know, you just think about the heart feeling things. But he's helping us to see a sense of the heart of that spiritual beauty. There's a distinction to be made between mere theoretical understanding, wherein a mind only beholds things in the exercise of speculative faculty.

So there seems to be a distinction between mere theoretical understanding, observing things from afar in a speculative way like a scientist might.

So there's a difference between that and the sense of the heart, wherein the mind does it only speculate and behold, but relishes and feels.

It's very important what Edwards is pointing out. There's this distinction between knowing something theoretically. So knowing Christ is a Savior.

[22 : 03] There's a difference between knowing that generally, this generally theoretical truth, and experiencing it, relishing it. Later on, Edwards says that a big difference between knowing honey is sweet and tasting it.

Right? Well, the same thing is going on in the Scriptures. The Apostle Paul is calling for something deeper than theoretical knowledge about God in Christ, but a relishing in understanding Him deeply.

And we know this to be true. There's so many ways in which the sanctification is about closing the gap between the things we know in our mind and the things we believe, trust, obey with our heart. So you can know that you should drive patiently behind someone that shouldn't be in the left lane of the interstate, but you might not be able to apply that. Yet, you might not be able to be patient and kind.

And so there's a similar thing going on here. He's closing the gap, so to speak, and helping us to understand. Then the Apostle, after he prays for the Spirit to come, he ushers us into or he discloses, reveals the three prayers he prays.

[23 : 19] Beginning in verse 18. Having the eyes of your heart 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 toward us who believe? These are his requests. Each one begins with that pronoun, what.

Each one includes a reference to the recipient. Who receives these wonderful gifts? Each one increases in detail. If you notice, He prays firstly that we truly understand and see the hope to which he has called us.

What is the hope to which he has called us? That we truly understand. Calling is one of the most common one-word descriptions of what it means to be a Christian. What is a Christian? It's someone who is called.

And behind the calling is a caller. And calling, therefore, it reminds us of the decisive intervention of God in calling us from darkness to light and from death to life.

[24 : 26] This calling for those formerly captive in sin gives rise to hope. Once we had no hope, but now that we are called to the one hope that belongs to our call.

Now, when we talk about hope, we talk about things that are uncertain. We hope it won't rain again tomorrow. We hope that the Tennessee volunteers win the natty.

But the hope of our calling is as certain as the calling to which we've been called. God wants us to see that our hope is secure. He wants us to have a deep sense that we await glory.

That the full redemption of our bodies awaits us. That nothing in this life or death can destroy our hope. That on the other side of the grave is eternal life.

What did Andy write Ed? I mean Red, after he got out of Shawshank. Do you remember? That great movie, Red said to Andy, Hope is a dangerous thing.

[25 : 33] It will drive a man insane. But Andy wrote in the closing lines of the movie, Remember Red, hope is a good thing. Maybe the best of things.

And no good thing ever dies. The Apostle Paul is calling for this people surrounded in an ungodly culture much like this. To remember your hope.

Don't let it die. Don't get comfortable. Don't bury the treasure. Don't lose hope. I love the way C.S. Lewis says this. He says, Hope is one of those theological virtues.

This means that a continual looking forward to the eternal world is not, as some modern people think, a form of escapism or wishful thinking. But one of the things a Christian is meant to do.

If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world. Listen to the way he concludes, I must keep alive in myself the desire for my true country, which I shall not find till after death.

[26 : 39] I must never let it get snowed under or turned aside. I must make it the main object of my life, to press on to that other country and to help others do the same.

He's praying for the Spirit to give hope, to root us and ground us in the certainty of the things that we can't see now.

He continues, He prays that we would understand and see the inheritance to which He has promised us. Look at verse 18. What are the riches of His glorious inheritance in the saints?

We've already seen numerous references to this already, this inheritance that we have, along with being sons and heirs in Christ. In Him, in Christ, we have an inheritance with the Father.

Our assumption is that this means we have a share in the wealth or something like that, but the emphasis throughout these references is that we have been claimed by God as His inheritance, His possession, His people.

[27 : 44] It's more explicit here. Look at the way it says, What are the riches of His glorious inheritance in the saints? What is the inheritance? It's God gathering a people for Himself, for His possession.

If our hope is life eternal, then the inheritance is life eternal with God, and God wants us there.

There are few things more crushing than being rejected.

I remember meeting with a lady one time and her husband. The husband had committed adultery. We were working through the wreckage, and one of the things she said is when she found out, it reminded her of walking home from school with two friends as a little six-year-old, another boy and a girl.

Suddenly, they both turned on her and began making fun of her. She walked home crying alone. Here was this 50-plus-year-old woman talking about being rejected at six years old because that's what it felt like now.

So many ways, our greatest fear is that heaven will not be the great welcome, but the great rejection where people see us for who we really are and laugh mockingly at us.

[29 : 10] But the stunning truth behind this inheritance, this theme running through here and all through the New Testament is not just that God calls us to himself, but that God wants us for himself.

It's as if God is saying in and through these words, you belong to me. You're of great value to me. I gave my son to you. I want you to be with me.

God is not primarily thinking, I want us to awaken to how much we value God, but how much he values us. So often we think the measure of our relationship with God is how much we value him, but the measure of our relationship with God is always how much he values us in Jesus Christ.

Twice the extravagance of this inheritance is underlined, riches and glorious. Why? Because believers in this life often look foolish, despised and rejected, but one day the world will see that he's called a people that look like that to display his glory.

And they'll be washed by the water of the word and presented to the lamb without spot or wrinkle or any such things. That's what it is.

[30 : 24] This inheritance protects us from being discouraged and from being in despair, giving in to disappointment, dissatisfaction. He prays also that we'd understand the greatness of his power to accomplish what he promised.

This verse, beginning in verse 19, what is the immeasurable? The third thing, what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe according to the working of his great might?

It includes three synonyms for power, power, working, and might. It could be rendered, the greatness of his power toward us who believe according to the power of his great power.

Just tons of power going on there. It's almost as if the apostle Paul couldn't say it, just wanted to, he couldn't get it right, so he keeps stacking on all these words for power.

He says his power is immeasurably great. This word occurs three times in Ephesians. The riches of his grace are immeasurable. The love of Christ is immeasurable.

[31 : 26] His power is immeasurably great. The power of God outstrips all restrictions, overwhelms all boundaries, overtakes all rivals, knows no limit.

The only limit to the power of God is that which is limited by the wisdom and will of God. And this power is toward us who believe. Toward us who believe.

It's his great power at work. It's almost as if the apostle Paul anticipates us saying, that can't be true for me. My temptations are too many.

His power is more than enough to save. My heart is prone to wander and turn away. His power is enough to save. My doubts are too paralyzing. My sorrows too overwhelming.

My past too broken. This world with too many devils fill. His power is enough to overcome all of these things for the glory of his grace.

[32 : 33] You know, so often we think God's power would be displayed most wonderfully by snatching us out of the world and whisking us home in one great act.

We think the Jim Elliotts of the world is where the power of God is displayed most wonderfully. But it's not the way we should think.

His power will be displayed in a greater way by causing us to remain steadfast through many dangers, toils, and snares. Stephen Charnock says, God does more magnify his power in continuing a believer in the world.

A weak and half-rigged vessel in the midst of so many sands whereupon it might split, so many rocks whereon it might dash, so many corruptions within, and so many temptations without, than if he did immediately transport him to heaven and clothe him with a perfectly sanctified nature.

How might God be wanting to magnify his power in your life? The greatest displays of power in the local church are so often not what's said from a stage or some prophetic word or some important spiritual gifts, but those who continue to trust God without cursing him.

[34 : 03] Those who have been beat down by cancer, by difficulty, that don't give in to despair. That's the power of God on display. We have eyes that are looking for grace.

That's where the grace of God is most powerful. In many ways. Point three, because God is sovereign, we trust his power to work out his gracious purposes for his people.

Paul has been asking God to open the eyes of our hearts to see the greatness of his power. In these verses, Paul continues and doubles down on the power of God to work out his purposes in this life.

Where do you see the power of God? What do you think when you think of the sovereign power of God? Maybe the designing of every star, the roaring of Niagara Falls, or the constructing of Mount Kilimanjaro, the Grand Canyon, or molding of the tiny fairy fly, or the duck-billed platypus.

All of these things display power, but the Apostle Paul wants us to see the power of God in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. He kind of goes off of his prayer, so to speak, to exalt and exult in the power of God in the raising of Jesus Christ.

[35 : 25] He says, verse 20, that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead. God raised Jesus from the dead. The most stubborn fact in the universe is the empty tomb.

Christ died, and three days later, the tomb was empty. God raised him from the dead, and 500 people saw it. Any other historical fact confirmed by 500 eyewitnesses would be a slam dunk. And so, too, the stubborn fact of the resurrection point to the reality that Jesus Christ was fully God and died in such a way for the sins of men and was raised.

There's nothing more fantastic than the resurrection. God created new life in the dead body of Jesus Christ and raised him from the dead. And the Apostle Paul is saying, the power we need is like that power.

We need something like this resurrection power that he worked in Christ is this working of power that we need in our life.

[36 : 32] So God raised him from the dead. God exalted him at his right hand. It says, seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places.

One of the most quoted verses in the New Testament from the Old Testament is Psalm 110. There God says, the promised Messiah would sit at the right hand of God.

So the promised Messiah, the anointed one, the fulfillment of all these promises, would not merely be another prophet, but would be God, would be the Lord.

And that's exactly what the Apostle is pointing out here. He's exalted to the right hand of God. Jesus is not just the promised Messiah. He is the Lord, exalted now at the right hand of God, exalted far above everyone else.

But the emphasis is not so much on that he reigns, but that he has defeated all of the king's enemies. It says he's seated in the heavenly places.

[37 : 37] Verse 21, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion and above every name that is named. At the end of this letter, the Apostle Paul warns us that we don't wrestle just against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, authority, cosmic powers over this present darkness, spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places, while now he says those ones we still wrestle with are under his feet, are firmly under his feet.

He is above every name that is named. Now you've got to understand in Ephesus, this fascination with power was widely evident, as we know from Acts 19.

It's a city with a pantheon of God, just a display of God. You could just add one into the mix and worship him. It's enamored with magic and curses, obsessed with spiritual warfare and exorcisms and opposition.

All these spiritual battles, you would name the name of the spirit to gain control over it. Well, Jesus is named above every other name. Not only that, they lived in a world under the rule of Rome. Their coins reminded them of Rome. Their many sculptures and statues reminded them of Rome. The inscriptions, the calendar remind them of Roman rule. Many believe the rule of Rome would never end.

[39 : 03] But Paul says, Jesus Christ is exalted above all, not only in this age, but also in the one to come. The plan of God for all times is organized around Jesus Christ.

The government shall be upon his shoulder, and his rule shall never end. And so it says, God put all things under his feet, quoting Psalm 8.

Now, 1 Corinthians 15 says, he must reign until all enemies are under his feet. Well, this one's saying, they're already under his feet because it's as good as done because of what God has done in Christ.

Concludes verse 22 and 23. New sentence. Apostle says, he put all things under his feet, continuing from before, and then he says, he gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

Why the sudden mention of the church? I think the idea seems to be, if all things are under his feet, where's the church?

[40 : 21] Where are those who believe? Are they under his feet as well? Are they trampled underneath him like all the other enemies?

No. They're his body. It brings in this other metaphor. They're his body in which he is the head. Christ, the head of the church, the ruler of all things, is the one who rules over the church. Christ has trampled all of his enemies. He's the king and the ruler, the head, and the church is his body on earth, the body of Christ on earth.

He's going to expound this a little bit more later on. The church is the body of Christ, not an enemy under his feet. The church is the body of Christ with all of his enemies under their feet.

The fullness of him who fills all in all. I think the idea is, Christ is exalted above all. He is the head. The church is his body still in this realm, and yet spread throughout the world, filling the world with his presence and with the proclamation of the gospel until the end of the age.

[41 : 46] And so, how do we live now? We live in what theologians would call the overlapping of the ages.

You see that already, not only in this age, but also in the one to come. This idea that when Jesus Christ came, he was the firstborn of a new creation.

It's what Colossians 1 says. He's the firstborn of a new age, a breaking in of an age in which there is everlasting life. He's already been raised on high.

Forgiveness of sins is already extended, but it's not yet in full because we're not home. We're not yet with him. So many of the problems in this life would be resolved if we understood which age we were in.

Wonderfully, we're not in the old age in which it would say sin and die. We're in the age of repent and find salvation in Christ, but we're not in the age to come.

[42 : 52] And so the beloved and the believer still suffers. The best illustration I've ever heard about this reality has to do with World War II.

June 6, 2024, just a few months ago, was the 80th anniversary of D-Day. There's only a few there. Few that were there that are still alive. On that day, the Western Allies landed on the beaches of Normandy.

It was D-Day. In three days, 1.1 million men and tons and tons of trucks and ammo landed in Normandy. Anyone with a brain in their head would have said, the war is over.

But Hitler did not say, oops, it was me. You know, forgive me. Let's make peace. No, he fought harder. Nazi Germany fought harder.

Some of the longest and bloodiest battles of the war came after D-Day. Have you ever heard of the Battle of the Bulge? Nearly a year would pass before it was officially V-E Day, Victory in Europe Day, and the world just broke into celebration.

[44 : 00] Well, living for Christ in this present age is like living in between D-Day and V-E Day. We don't live as if the end is uncertain and unknown.

We live confident that it is known and certain that Jesus Christ has been raised and exalted far above all, rule and authority and power and dominion. He is the King of kings and the Lord of lords and every knee will bow before Him.

And so we live with hope. We live with courage. We live peacefully and quietly in undisturbed reliance on the power of God.

John Flavel quote we have for you. I love it. He says, Jesus, our head is already in heaven and if the head be above the water, the body cannot drown. That's the truth.

We're not freaking out. We're trusting the Lord. We live like those of whom it was said, heaven was in them before they were in heaven. May we continually pray asking God to be God and to do what only God can do in our hearts and lives.

[45 : 14] Let us pray. Father in heaven, commit ourselves and our lives to you. Help us, God, to rest on you more and more. We pray in Jesus' name.

Amen. Amen. You've been listening to a message given by Walt Alexander, lead pastor of Trinity Grace Church in Athens, Tennessee. For more information about Trinity Grace, please visit us at trinitygraceathens.com.

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