

Communion and Church Unity

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Well, it's a communion Sunday here at Truth Community, and I'm so glad that you're here to join with us in this remembrance of the Lord's death on our behalf. The marvel of Christianity is that our Creator and our Maker and our Judge, even, has voluntarily come into this world and lay down His life as a sacrifice for our sins. This truly is love beyond degree. This is words that are beyond compare that Christ has stepped into this world to rescue a people for Himself. And from all of eternity He saw fit to number us among His elect, to number us among those for whom He was willing to die, to number us among those for whom He did die, to number us among those for whom He will one day come again. Communion is a time to remember that death, the bread symbolizing the body of Christ, the cup symbolizing the blood of Christ shed for the remission of our sin. He was crushed for our iniquities, and that's what we remember here today, as we come to the communion table, and it's a joy and a blessing for us to be able to do so.

Today, I want to use this message to prepare our hearts for the Lord's Table. We're going to take a break from the doctrinal series that we've been doing simply to focus our attention on Christ this morning and the way that His work on our behalf, how that works to promote even our spiritual unity as a body of believers that gather together week by week. Make no doubt about it, here at Truth Community our supreme focus is the Lord Jesus Christ. It's not in a so-called seeker. It's not in a one particular man or anything like this. Our focus is on Christ. He's the one that we love. He's the one that we praise. He is the one that we remember, as we come to the Lord's Table, and we do so with the knowledge, with the certainty testified by the inerrant word of God, that His righteousness and shed blood are the ground of our redemption.

Turn to Ephesians chapter 1, if you would. Ephesians chapter 1. As we prepare our hearts to remember our Lord in the way that He commanded, He said, "Do this in remembrance of Me." And so today, we have a particular privilege not only of remembering Christ in His work on the cross, but to do so in the way that He particularly commanded His people to do. This is a Sunday of blessing and privilege for us of Truth Community to be able to remember our selfless sacrificial Lord on Sunday morning. And Ephesians chapter 1 verse five, it says, "that God predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will to the praise of the glory of His grace which he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. In Him we have redemption

through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace, which he lavished on us." As Christians, we see ourselves in this passage. As Christians, we realize that the Apostle Paul is describing God's people, the people for whom Christ died, as he speaks here in Ephesians chapter 1. And our salvation was not an afterthought. It was the purpose of God through all eternity. From eternity past, He predestined us to the very position that we now enjoy in Christ. There was never a moment in time where God's saving intention toward us was lost on His mind. He predestined us for this very purpose that He might adopt us into His family to belong uniquely to Him, not only for a time, but throughout all of eternity future.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, we have such a magnificent position of privilege that belongs to us as Christians. He predestined us to adoption, and this is not primarily about us, even. This is to the praise of the glory of His grace it says in verse six. We are saved not so that we might be the object of attention, but that Christ Himself might be the object of attention, that He might receive the glory for the wonder of redemption. And look at verse six. It's to the praise of the glory of His grace, His undeserved favor. Those of us who deserved judgment, instead, are on the receiving end of divine blessing and privilege. Not because we had done anything to earn it. It says that in verse six, He freely bestowed this on us in the Beloved. It was a free gift of God's favor and kindness grounded, verse seven, it says, "In Him we have redemption through His blood." We have been purchased out of our slavery to sin at the cost, at the price, of the life blood of the perfect Son of God. We have, it says in verse seven, the forgiveness of our trespasses. God will not hold our sins against us any longer. Those of you that come this morning, conscious of the fact that you have fallen short in the past week in ways that cause your soul pain, we see here that the blood of Christ is sufficient for the forgiveness of those sins. Scripture says that He has removed our sins from us as far as the east is from the west, a metaphor for saying that in no way will God ever hold our sins against us anymore. He has removed them from our account. Where guilt was charged to us, He took it away and applied instead the righteousness of Christ to our account, so that we would have a perfect standing with a holy God. You and me, sinners by nature, you and me, sinners by choice, preferring disobedience to worship, and in our time before Christ, dead in our trespasses and sins. Here it is laid out in marvelous glory that we have redemption through His blood. Our slate has been wiped clean. Righteousness has been given to us, and look at it in verse seven. Paul just piles up the magnitude of the goodness of God toward His people. It's according to the riches of His grace which he lavished on us. God didn't merely drizzle out a little bit of kindness, a little bit of sugar, upon His people. According to the riches of His infinite grace, He has poured out blessing upon us. He lavished it upon us treasure upon treasure upon treasure of us who were in the rags of unrighteousness before Him. He brought us to Himself, and He did it at the price of the blood of Christ whom we remember at the Table here this morning.

We're grateful, aren't we? We're grateful for Christ. We're grateful for this love, for this mercy, for this kindness, for this grace, and we understand, without pride, without apology, we understand that this came at God's initiative, not us. We are in this position because He first loved us. We love Christ, not because we first loved Him, but because, first John 4:19 says, "He first loved us." The priority, the initiative, came from a holy

God toward sinful people, not from a sinful people toward a holy God. That's humbling. It's joyous at the same time. We realize that we're here at this Table. That we're commanded to come. That we're welcome to come at the initiative of a gracious King, at the initiative of a merciful Savior, a wonderful Savior. That's what we're remembering here today as we come to the Table. The sacrifice of Christ and, beloved, corporately, as we contemplate this today, the greatness of the sacrifice, the greatness of Christ, the holiness of Christ, the grace of Christ, the mercy of Christ, the purity of Christ, the kindness, the gentleness, the tender mercies of Christ toward us. That's what we remember, and it should make us humble, it should make us grateful, it should drive us to worship this morning, and, as it has that effect upon us, it'll prepare our hearts for Communion. To take Communion as Scripture commands, in a worthy manner.

One of the ways we take communion in a worthy manner is that we cultivate our spiritual unity together as a body of corporate believers. Look at Ephesians chapter 4 for just a moment. Ephesians chapter 4. One of the main points that Paul has in this epistle is to promote the unity of the church. This is the driving application that he starts with. After these first three chapters in Ephesians of laying forth the great doctrinal realities of our salvation. He says to apply it. He says in verse four, he says. "Therefore, I," the therefore, this is the implication that we should take out of the grandeur of our salvation. Paul says in chapter 4 verse one, "Therefore, I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called." You see, we've just refreshed our memory in these opening comments about the grandeur, the magnificence, of the call that God has placed on our lives. The grandeur of the fact that the eternal Son of God would lay His life down to save us, to make us His people. Well, how do we respond in a manner that's worthy of that? The Hymn that we sang just before the message said, "That if the whole realm of nature was mine that would be an offering far too small to give back to Christ." How could you give back a physical dimension to properly thank Christ for the spiritual blessings that He's given to us, is the point of that. What price do you put on the sacrifice that saved your soul? How do you value that? If I gave all of the realm of nature it wouldn't be enough to say thank you. Paul has that kind of thought in his mind there in verse one. He says, "Realize that the magnitude of the reality of the cross places a call upon your life to respond in a worthy manner." And he goes on to explain what that looks like in verse two, as we are, as it were, almost chastened by the price of our salvation, as we remember the undeserved lavish grace that's been poured out upon us. He says in verse two, "With all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

One of the ways that we respond in a worthy manner to the sacrifice of Christ is that we're conscious of the priority of the unity of the body of Christ, the unity of our own life together as a body of believers. And that one of the ways we take communion in a manner that is worthy of Christ is to cultivate that spiritual unity. To understand that we take communion not in isolation, not as spiritual silos, as it were, but we remember, as we come to Communion, that Christ died for a people, of which we are a part. We are conscious of the fact that He died for the church, and that as a part of the church, we want to do what we can to preserve the unity of that, to make that a priority that subjugates our

selfishness, and our own desires, and conflicts, and subjects and says, "No, unity is more important than these other things."

Well, the passage that Andrew read for us earlier helps us cultivate a spiritual perspective that will help us appreciate the importance in the priority of church unity as we come to Communion. That's what we want to look at here this morning. Andrew read Ephesians 1 verses 15 to 23. I won't repeat it here, as we read here today, as I preach here today, I should say, but I just want to pull out a couple of brief items for you to help us be mindful of how it is. What are the spiritual attitudes that cultivate spiritual unity so that we, not only individually, but we corporately could take Communion in a worthy manner today. That we would honor the sacrifice of Christ with the proper attitude not only toward Him, but also toward one another.

First of all there's two things I want to bring out from that passage to you. First of all, we thank God for each other. We thank God for each other. Look at verses 15 and 16 of Ephesians chapter 1, remembering that Paul had been expounding on the redemption that is found in Christ, that coming up is going to be this emphasis on church unity. Here he turns to prayer in verse 15 as one of the driving engines of the response that we are to make to the sacrifice, and as we live with one another. Paul says in verse 15, "For this reason, I too, 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." It's appropriate that Paul would give thanks for believers, because the source of their spiritual life came from God Himself. He recognizes the spiritual life that has been described to him by these people that have come to him and have described the faith of the people at Ephesus and in other areas and Paul says, "I am so grateful to God about these things that I have heard." Paul recognized that they had true faith in Christ, and whatever their other problems might be that he addresses later in the letter, Paul could affirm that faith and thank God for them. To recognize that the Christians that he was addressing, for us to recognize that the Christians with whom we gather here this morning have their spiritual life as a gift from this sovereign, gracious God, and as you see that life in one another, as we see that life in each other, a love for Christ, a love for his word, a desire to serve, a sweetness of spirit, which I believe is really coming to mark the life of Truth Community, we realize, beloved, that what we're seeing manifested around us is something that God has done in our lives individually and corporately. And we realize the source, and, therefore, we give thanks to the source. "God, thank you for these believers with whom I share spiritual life together."

And as we take communion here this morning, in just us a few short moments, beloved, I want to encourage us, encourage you, to remember that Christ died not only for you. He died for the rest of us as well. We share in this together. We are together the privileged recipients of divine favor, and as we look and contemplate who's sitting next to us and who's in front of us and who's behind us, we realize that we are part of something bigger than ourselves, that we are grateful for a work of Christ that was for a people. And as we think about it from that perspective, it elevates our view of the sacrifice of Christ even more. It's not just that Christ has been gracious to me. He's been gracious to you, Holly. He's been gracious to you, Buddy. He's been gracious to you, Chuck. I could go down the

line, and this multiplies our joy in taking Communion. This multiplies the wonder of the gift. I'm with people, as I take communion, that share in like manner of the gift. You've been an object of the redeeming grace of Christ just like I have, and vice versa. And the appropriate response for that is for us to thank God for that. That, "God, thank you that you weren't just merciful to me. You were merciful to a lot of other people in this room too." That attitude will help us not be unwittingly self-centered in our approach. We're grateful for the grace that saved us. We're grateful that God extended it to others as well, and we're grateful. I'm grateful. I know you are too. We're grateful that somehow in the course of His magnificent providence, He has pulled us together as a body of believers for us to share in that life together, to go through life, to walk through life, loving His word, loving Christ, and loving each other. It's a great great gift bought for us at the price of the body and the blood that we remember here at the Communion Table today.

Communion draws us together. Communion pulls us together in a way that reminds us of the corporate life that we share. And Paul says, look back at verse 15 and 16 with me. He says, "I'm thankful for your love for all the saints." He's thankful for the visible way in which they had manifested love in practical ways for other believers. It was a tangible love, not something merely affirmed with their lips, but absent from their lives. And that has application for us as we live together as believers, as we go through life together. And let me just draw out one particular way in which I think it helps us. It is easy to find fault with other Christians in the church. Now, I haven't seen this is as a major problem in the life of Truth Community, but I just want to point this out to help us strengthen and gird up our hearts even more. It's easy to find fault in the church. "Sam's a grumbler. Sally is always late. Do you know what So-and-so did to me?" You know the spirit. Some of you have come from churches that cultivated that angriness, that anger, in your lives. Well, as we come together around the Communion Table here this morning, I want to encourage you to lay that aside in the spirit of thanking God for one another. When you remember the fact that Christ Jesus didn't work for the salvation of those who were gathered together here today, we recognize that work of Christ in their lives, and we thank God for it. And all of a sudden the things that we're prone to complain about, the things we're prone to find fault in, suddenly seem to diminish by comparison. And that's the way it should be.

As we come together and remember the great sacrifice of Christ on our behalf, it should cause us to look at one another with a more generous gracious spirit. If Christ has had grace upon you, then I should have a generous gracious attitude toward you as well, and vice versa. As we're pulled together around a remembrance of the sacrifice of Christ, it causes us to lay aside the complaints, knowing that, think about it this way, beloved: God, in a manner of speaking, laid aside His complaints against you. In fact, He laid them on the shoulders of Christ and punished Christ for His legitimate complaints against you, and you now stand in the position of privilege and favor that you didn't earn. Doesn't that spill over into the way that we look at each other? Doesn't it spill over into the way that we think about one another? If God's been gracious to you, can I not be gracious to you? Can I hold things against you that God has forgiven you for? You see the spirit of gratitude for salvation spills over into the life of the body, and it changes the way we look at each other. I want to tell you, beloved, that as that starts to feed into the way that we

approach the Communion Table, we'll be taking Communion in an even more worthy manner as we let things of complaint, and faultfinding, and bitterness go, because they're simply drowned in the magnitude of the flood of the mercy of God upon you and upon me. And so, we're grateful. We're grateful for Christ. We're grateful for each other. What a privilege to come together as a body of like-minded believers who love Christ together. Here is our spiritual oasis in the midst of a crumbling world, right? So, we're grateful for that.

Paul takes it another step further. We thank God for each other as we come to Communion. There's another aspect of Paul's prayer that I want to show to you that would help us cultivate the right attitude, not only today, but going forward as well. A spiritual attitude, an attitude of prayer, and I would term it this way, our second point: as you thank God for each other, go another step further and pray for each other's spiritual understanding. Pray for each other's spiritual understanding. We need the help of the Holy Spirit to grow in Christ. And if you look at verse 17, you can see how Paul continues to pray. He prays in a way that advances the spiritual interests of his readers, and we follow the example, and we pray for each other in a way that advances each other's spiritual interest, because we love each other, because we're grateful for one another, because we see this pattern laid out for us in Scripture. Look at verse 17. Ephesians chapter 1 verse 17. Actually, let your eye drift back up to verse 16. It kind of flows out of that. Paul says, "I do not cease giving thanks for you while making mention of you in my prayers." O.K. So, he says, "I pray for you." And someone might ask, "Paul, why don't you tell me how you pray for me? What is that you ask God to do as you're praying for me?" Well, the magnitude of the generosity of the apostolic heart is such that it's overwhelming. He says, "Here's how I pray for you," verse 17. He says, "I pray that," here's the content of his prayer, "I pray 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." He's praying for their spiritual understanding. He's praying that God would enlarge their capacity to grasp the magnitude and the truth of their salvation. He's asking that God the Father would do a work through the Holy Spirit that would provide greater wisdom and greater understanding, illumination, of what it means to belong to Christ, a revelation in the knowledge of Him. Paul is asking that the Spirit of God would be at work in the hearts and minds of these people giving them further insight and unveiling God's purpose in Christ for them. It's a recognition. It's a recognition that we are still spiritually dull in our understanding which is not a criticism. It's simply a recognition that as natural fallen men in the flesh living in a world that is dominated by the devil, even as redeemed individuals, we don't get it all. We don't see it all. We don't have the fullness of the picture in front of us. And you and I know by sad personal experience how true that is. Something goes wrong in life, somebody responds to us in a way that we wish they wouldn't, problems start to multiply on this earth, and, suddenly, we are consumed with the present. We are consumed with what is going on horizontally in time, and we've lost sight of the magnitude of the salvation that belongs to us.

We get wrapped up in politics. We get wrapped up in trials, in work, in all these other things, and we forget! And we don't get it. And Paul says, "I want you to appropriate, I want you to live in the conscious realm of the great blessings that God has given to us.

And so I'm praying that God will do that work in your heart, so that you would more fully appreciate, more fully appreciate the magnitude of this salvation that Christ has bought for us, which we today are remembering at this Table." You see, see Paul was praying not for their physical health, as we tend to do, as tends to multiply our thoughts, even in prayer. He wasn't praying for their financial prosperity as far too many preachers today want to drive our attention to, as if financial blessing was the only mark of the blessing of God. Please! Do you realize, this is an aside, this one's for free: do you realize how paltry, how meager it is to focus people's attention on the financial prosperity of their lives as a sign of the blessing of God? How paltry that is in comparison to the sacrifice of the eternal Son of God that we remember here today. How can you compare those two? How can you make something physical the mark of the signature blessing of what was obviously a spiritual work at great cost to the Son of God? That's foolish. That robs salvation of its very meaning, to turn our attention in that direction.

And so, as we contemplate the reality of our salvation, as we pray for one another throughout the life of our church, and whatever years the Lord gives to us together, as we pray for one another even here this morning, look at what Paul prays for. What spiritual understanding did Paul ask for? How did he ask God to enlighten their eyes? Well, we're going to see two aspects of it. As we pray for each other's spiritual understanding, as Paul prayed, first of all, he wants them to better appreciate the hope of God's call. The hope of God's call, look at verse 18. He says "I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened so that." He's focused like a laser. He's not just praying in general. He says, "Here is specifically what I'm praying for you. I want you to have your heart enlightened by God, 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." He says, "I realize that life here on earth is going to dull your sensitivity to these great invisible spiritual realities, and so I'm asking the Spirit of God to do an invisible work in your heart to expand your comprehension, to expand your affections, to give you a greater appreciation for what belongs to you as a Christian. I want you to know the hope of God's call. You who are preoccupied with life as it is here and now on earth, I want you to understand that salvation is about something far greater than that. I want you to understand that the eternal reality that belongs to us as Christ's, dwarfs what you're experiencing right now." Paul is asking God to help his readers more fully appreciate that one day soon, makes me tap my toes in anticipation, one day soon, just around the corner, just a little bit longer, and we're going to be with Christ face-to-face in all His glory. We're going to be with the Lord. We're going to share in His glory. That is the great hope. That is the great certain expectation that belongs to us as being the privileged recipients of this great salvation which we remember at the Table today.

Turn over to John chapter 14. John chapter 14. It's not about this life, beloved. This life is incidental. It is secondary in purpose. It's not our best life now. Our best life is still to come. John 14 verse one. "Jesus said, 'Do not let your heart be troubled. You believe in God. Believe also in me. In my Father's house are many dwelling places. If it were not so, I would have told you. For I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you.'" Oh the magnitude and yet the utter simplicity of the words that Christ uses to describe our future hope. He says, "I will come again and receive you to Myself that

where I am there you may be also." Christ is going to come for you. He's going to come for me. He's going to receive us. He's going to gladly welcome us into His presence, into this place that He's been preparing for us, because this great Son of God, who lavished His grace upon us at the cross, He wants us to be with Him. "Where I am, there you may be also." Christ saved us so that we could be with Him. He went away, as it were, to prepare a place for us, and the time is coming soon when everything's going to be ready, and that which was spoken of 2,000 years ago is going to find its fulfillment. We're almost there, beloved. We're almost there. We're almost about ready to enter into that glorious inheritance of being with Christ, and where He with His infinite love, His infinite omnipotence, His infinite knowledge, His infinite grace, goodness, kindness. This place that, out of that magnificent heart toward His people, He's been getting ready for us to share in together. Paul says, "I'm praying for you to understand, to somehow grasp the magnitude and the significance of this, because, if you can grasp something of that, it's going to make everything earthly pale by comparison." Everything shrinks in the presence of Christ, and everything about our struggles in this life shrink in the presence of the thought that we are one day going to be with Him, because He wants us there.

We wouldn't be there if He didn't want us there. Can you imagine? The eternal Son of God wants us to be with Him. I'll be honest, I think about this aspect of salvation a lot, and the more I think about it, the more I realize I just don't have any capacity to understand how great and glorious and wonderful that's going to be, but somehow, we ask God to help us. Somehow we're mindful that this is something to anticipate. It is a certain hope, a certain expectation that trumps everything bad and negative and sorrowful about this life. Paul says, "I'm praying for my readers to understand that." We look at that. We look at each other in gratitude that the Lord's done the same work in your life that He's done in mine, and we say, "You know what, I want the Lord to help you embrace that and understand that too." God will bestow riches on us, untold riches of an order of magnitude that is incomprehensible to human thinking. He's going to bestow that on us at the end of the age. And Christ secured infallibly that great magnificent blessing for us at the cross that we remember here today. "It's our inheritance," Paul says. He describes it as an inheritance. That which belongs to us in advance. It can never be taken away.

And so, beloved, as we go through life together as a corporate body of believers, that's our shared destiny. That's what we share together; it's what's going to happen to us. It belongs to you as much as it belongs to me. This is what we share together in life in the body of Christ. Part of what we share, part of what unifies us, part of what brings us together as believers, is the remembrance, is the ever-deepening understanding that there is a future glory, a future capstone, a future completion to being a Christian that will belong to us in heaven. Paul says, "I want you to understand that. I want you to love and grasp that in ever deepening measure." How can we comprehend such great unseen realities? How can we hope in that which we cannot see? Well, you see, in our own strength we can't. In our own natural approach to life, we won't. We need spiritual help from God. We need spiritual help from our Savior to more fully appreciate and appropriate that which already belongs to us by our position in Christ. And so, because, beloved, because we love each other, because we recognize the shared salvation that we

have, and that we're grateful for one another, we ask God to make visible, as it were, to our spiritual understanding that which is not visible to our physical eyes. Oh God, lift up our affections. Oh God, remind us of that which belongs to us, which has been promised to us in your Word. Oh God, let that be the controlling motivation and affection of our lives.

Do you realize that if God answered that prayer for us as a body of believers how wonderful life would be? Do you realize how wonderful it would be not to be consumed by the problems of day-to-day work, and relationships, and all of that stuff, and to let your heart be molded and shaped by the great expectation of future blessing that is so glorious human lips can't describe it? Wouldn't that be a wonderful way to live? Wouldn't that be a wonderful way for us to go through spiritual life together as Truth Community? Paul says, "I want you to know that."

So as we remember the sacrifice of Christ, as we remember the outcome that that has been guaranteed for us, we look at that, and we look at each other, and we respond, and we pray for each other to see the spiritual truth that defines our lives. Your work, your marriage, your children, your relationships, your future on earth is not what is the defining reality of your life. The defining reality of your life as a Christian belongs to a future realm that is yet unseen, but is certain in its fulfillment. It's not just that Christ died so that our sins could be forgiven. That would be glorious enough as it were. It would have been wonderful if Christ had just restored us to a neutral position to deliver us from wrath. That would be wonderful. That would be cause for eternal gratitude. Do you see it? Beloved, do you see it? That he not only took away our demerit, He gave to us a position of eternal privilege that transcends everything about this life. And one other thing that it should do for you is that even the things that you most treasure in this life should start to pale in comparison to the glory that is yet to be revealed.

If there's any hesitation on your part to go to heaven, because you want to cling a little longer to what's here on earth, ah man, rethink your priorities, would you? I love everything that's going on in my life right now, but if God took it away and took me right now to be in the presence of Christ. That's what it's all about. That's the point of my existence is to be with Christ, because, however wonderful your loves and relationships are here, that's not the final purpose of your redemption. Your final purpose is to be with Christ, the one who bought you, and that's where your ultimate final affections should lie. If we could see how wonderful, how gracious, how magnificent the riches of that are, there wouldn't even be a contest about where we wanted to be. Paul says, "I pray that you'd understand that. I pray that your mind would be captivated by the hope of what it means to belong to Christ, who died to pay the price of your redemption." When I'm thinking rightly about life, I'm living for one moment, one moment: to be in the presence, the physical presence of Christ and to be able to look into His face to see His glory and say, "Jesus, thank you for what you've done." That's what an understanding of our salvation will do. It narrows our focus to our future hope.

Now Paul isn't done praying. He wants them to grasp the significance of the future hope, for sure, but he also prays that they would see something of the greatness of God's power

that is at work in their lives. Look at verse 19 with me. He said in verse 18, "I want you to know the hope of your calling." And in verse 19 he joins that with something else, and he says, "And I'm praying that you would see what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe." Most of this life we feel weakness and distress, don't we? We're conscious of physical weakness. We're conscious of failings in our own life and of those around us, and sometimes we lose sight of the power of God, because it's not visible in front of us. And so, Paul is praying, "I want you to see. I want you to grasp in your mental sight the power of God toward us who believe." And then he explains what that power is like. He says, there in verse 19, he says, "These are in accordance with the working." Notice how he piles up synonyms. "The working of the strength of His might, power, strength and might." And what he's praying here is, "I want you to understand that the very highest power of God is at work in your salvation. It's at work in your life right now, even if it doesn't seem like it. Even if you don't feel it. I'm praying that you would understand that the power that saved you is the same power that is keeping you. That power will deliver you into the presence of Christ without fail."

And what's that power like? Well, it's the same power, verse 20, which God brought about in Christ when He raised Him from the dead. The literal, historical, time and space resurrection that left behind an empty tomb, that raised Jesus Christ from the dead, that power is the same power that's at work in our lives as believers today. Paul says, "I want you to understand that. The power that raised Christ from the dead is the power that is at work in you." He goes on in verse 20. "The power that seated Christ at God's right hand in the heavenly places is the power that's at work in you. The power that put Christ," verse 21, "above all rule, and authority, and power, and dominion. The power that exalted Him to the highest place of all throughout all of the seen and unseen realms. That power is the power that's at work in you." Paul says, "I want you to see this. I want you to understand that, so that you won't lose hope, so that you will be strong and courageous as you go through life. Does opposition come, does persecution come, does society now array itself against Christians in a way that we're not used to in the United States? So what! I don't care! I don't care at all! You know why? Because a far greater power is at work in my salvation, the power that raised Christ from the dead. They could kill our bodies, but they can't kill our souls. I don't fear them. I fear God who has that kind of power. I fear Him in the sense that I worship and serve Him out of confidence and in a spirit of confidence. That the power that started the work in me is at work to finish that work, and that that power is not just any ordinary power. It's not a little bit of the spiritual five hour energy drink. No, no, this is resurrection power. It's at work in the life of you and me."

Paul says, "I want you to understand that. God's power raised Christ from the dead. It seated Christ at the right hand of God. It gave Christ victory over all the supernatural hosts. It put all things in subjection under Christ's feet, and, in His power, God made Christ head over the church." Look at verse 22. "He put all things in subjection under His feet, gave Him as head over all things to the church which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all." Beloved, the Table reminds us of astonishing realities. It reminds us of our redemption, the forgiveness of our sins. It reminds us that though Christ died, though His body was sacrificed for us, though His blood was shed, though

His life was surrendered on the cross, the Table reminds us that God raised Him from the dead, and it reminds us that the power that installed Christ over all of creation is the same power that operates in your life as a Christian. Where do we find room for anxiety, and discouragement, and fear in light of that? True, we don't see that power. We don't feel that power. But that doesn't make it any less real.

The realities, the spiritual realities that define the certainty of your salvation are not measured by your understanding or by what you see or feel or understand. God is not limited. The power is not limited by our physical, sensory perceptions. There is something completely different that defines reality for us as Christians. Paul says, "That's what I want you to understand, and I realize it's beyond your power to grasp it. And so, I'm asking God to do a work in you so that you would." He's praying for illumination to occur in their lives. And as we look at Paul's pattern, we say, "Well, yeah, of course, that's the way we should pray for each other." I thank God for you. I pray that God would cement in your heart a confidence in the hope of His call that is going to culminate in you being in the presence of Christ. I pray that God would help you understand and appropriate and put your confidence in the fact that the power that raised Christ from the dead is the same power that's at work in you now. Our spiritual privilege in Christ is incomprehensible, and yet, we ask God to help us understand it a little bit more so that we would drink of it, and that our lives would be transformed by it.

Those are the kinds of realities that we remember as we come to Communion here today. We remember the exalted Head of our church, the Lord Jesus Christ. We remember His death for us. We remember the benefits that He has secured for us in our salvation. And so it is with grateful hearts today that we come to the Lord's Table.

Bow with me in prayer as the men come forward.

Our Father, we thank you for the wonderful privilege that is ours as Christians. We thank you as we remember the blood and body of Christ, that we remember the whole complex of the greatness of our salvation. It's not primarily about this life. We're going to be with Christ one day face-to-face. It's not a life that we live in our own strength, or by our understanding, but Father your great omnipotent power which raised Christ from the dead is the same power that is at work in us. It is a power belonging to You who is able to do far more abundantly than all we could ask or think according to the power that works within us. And as we remember these things, Father, we give you all of the glory. We thank you that we share these things together. We pray for one another that we would remember that hope and be ennobled in life by it. We pray for one another that we would remember the power that is at work in our salvation.

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