Opening Words

When God exalted Jesus, He bestowed something upon Him – a name. The name is above every other name and will one day cause every knee to bow. What is the name? The name is a title, and the title is *Lord*!

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God has shown his great power in many ways, but he showed in the greatest way when he:

1. Raised Jesus from the dead
2. Enthroned Jesus at his right hand
3. Subjected the powers to him
4. Gave him back to the church.

When God enthroned Jesus at his right hand, it was a fulfillment of several promises, or prophecies, that we find in the Old Testament. One of the most important is Psalm 110:1 which says,

The LORD says to my Lord: "Sit at My right hand until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet."

Other passages are from 2 Samuel 7:14 and Psalm 16 which Peter quoted in Acts 2 and Paul in Acts 13, and they were claiming that Jesus is Messiah because he has fulfilled these prophecies of a son of David sitting at God's right hand.

What is special about God's right hand? Well, according to these passages it is the place of fulfilled promises. But in addition, it is the place of supreme authority under the authority of God.

Remember Philippians 2:9-11?

> Therefore also God highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those who are in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

When God exalted Jesus, He bestowed something upon Him – a name. The name is above every other name and will one day cause every knee to bow. What is the name? The name is a title, and the title is *Lord*!

These prophecies and their fulfillment are set in a larger context or storyline. They are set within the story of the authority God bestowed upon Adam, the sin of Adam and his race whereby the delegated authority is now misused, and the love of God to pay for the sin of Adam's race and restore mankind to his proper place of ruling over a restored creation.

In Jesus Christ, the Second Adam, man receives dominion again. One perfect man now resides in the presence of God. He is everything Adam was supposed to be – and more! And when Christ finished paying for our sins – once for all – God exalted Him to this place of dominion. The writer of Hebrews put it this way. We do not yet see all things subjected to humanity (in other words, we still see a fallen world), but we do see all things submitted to One Man – Jesus – crowned with glory and honor.

The right hand of God is the place of fulfilled promises and the place of highest authority and it is the place of highest praise. Today, heaven resounds with praise to the Lamb.

I hope you can see why the doctrine of the enthronement of Jesus excites me. It's not just a footnote about where Jesus went and where he is resting between his resurrection and second coming. It is a place of power and Paul says, I pray that you would grasp the surpassing greatness of this power in Christ because when you do, you will realize also that God directs this power to you.

God showed his power by raising him from the dead. He showed his power by exalting him to his right hand and he showed his power by subjecting all the angelic forces to Jesus. Remember, we are not just talking about good angels, but we are talking about fallen angels. We are talking about the spiritual forces of wickedness in heavenly places. We are talking about evil rulers who have enslaved people, families, cultures, and nations for thousands of years. But now, these powers can no longer run free and do as they please. Now there is a new power in heavenly places and these renegade powers acknowledge that this is true.

Paul tells us in Ephesians 1 that Christ is far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come and he put all things in subjection under his feet. Jesus is Lord over all of them and they cannot do anything without his permission.

Jesus is at the right hand of God that we might receive his power to advance the kingdom of God in the world against these evil forces. Isn't this why Jesus said to the apostles that the gates of Hell would not prevail against the Church? Jesus was looking ahead to the day when his Father would exalt him over the powers and when the Church would receive his power to spread his kingdom of light into this dark world.

That brings us to the fourth description of the power of God in this passage and another concept that is often overlooked by teachers. After God put the angelic forces in subjection to Christ, he then gave Christ as head over all things to the church. I want to emphasize something in this phrase. Notice that it says that the Father, gave Christ *to the church*.

When we think of God giving Christ to us we think of John 3:16, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life." God so loved the world that he gave His Son. We know that he gave him as the substitute for our sins. We know he gave him as the sacrificial lamb to bear our sins. And we know he gave him as

the Savior of all mankind for Peter says in Acts 4:12, "There is salvation in no one else for there is no other name under heaven that has been **given** by which we must be saved."

But as beautiful as these verses and truths are, Paul is not talking about that here. He is talking about, what I call, the *Second Giving* of Christ. He gave him the first time when he came to earth and died on the cross. But after he rose and was exalted to his right hand, he gave him again, not as a lamb but as Lord over the powers.

Look at the verse again, God put all things in subjection under Christ's feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church. Christ was given as the head of all things to the Church. And just as we come to God for the gift of the Son for salvation at the cross, we must learn to come to God for the gift of the Lordship of Christ and his power over all things as we engage in holy war in heavenly places.

And so, Paul prays in this passage, "I want you to know the surpassing greatness of the power of God toward all believers. God is directing his power toward all believers and the power that he directs is not some little Double A battery power, the power he is directing toward us is the same power he used when he raised Christ from the dead, when he enthroned him at his right hand, when he subjected the powers to him, and when he gave him to the Church as head over all things.

Now let me ask you a question – how big do your problems seem to you right now? Wouldn't you agree that we need to see them from the perspective of heavenly places? When we do, they seem small. When we don't, they seem larger than life, but nothing is impossible for God, whether you are facing issues in your life or in your circumstances or in the lives of your loved ones.

And here is more good news! You can pray this for the rest of your life! As I said earlier, there is no expiration date on this prayer. You can pray it for the rest of your life.

Now I want to close this section of Paul's great letter by sharing some wisdom with you about the power of God. I must do this because sometimes we hear messages like this and we think we are ready to go cast our demons and raise the dead and lead an entire city to Christ.

We must look at Paul's famous passage in 2 Corinthians 12:7-10 where he said:

> Because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me—to keep me from exalting myself! [8] Concerning this I implored the Lord three times that it might leave me. [9] And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. [10] Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.

The surpassing greatness of the revelations! The surpassing greatness of the power of God! Paul knew these well, yet he had to learn a vital lesson and we must learn the same lesson as well. The power of God manifests itself through us as we become weak. We must not picture ourselves as a mighty prophet parting a sea or calling down fire from heaven!

Instead, we must see ourselves as the weak, humble, needy people that we really are, and God reminds us by allowing us to experience weaknesses, insults, distresses, persecutions, and difficulties. God allows us to grow weak and to become humble and sometimes we will be tempted to think, "where are you God?" but God is right there in the process so that we will learn that the power is of God and not of us. And so, Paul said, "I am well content with weaknesses. I boast in my weaknesses because power is perfected in weakness and when I am weak then I am strong in Christ."

Are you willing to become weak? I hope so. I pray that for you and I would wish that you pray that for me as well so that together we might experience the surpassing greatness of the power of God in Jesus Christ as we pray this prayer in Ephesians 1 for the rest of our lives.