

Power In Christ

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[0 : 00] This is a sermon from King's Church West Lothian. I know how young Dewey looks, only three years ago.!

We're looking at this big idea of what it means to be in Christ. Today's topic is power in Christ.

About three years ago, we did a bit of a building project at home.

This is goodbye day to our garage as it was. We're like one last selfie as a team before we move out of our house for what the builders tell us is going to be a couple of weeks. We should have known better.

There's this sort of builder's time zone. What's happening here? Builder's time zone meant that that couple of weeks turned into a lot of weeks. So this was goodbye garage.

Hello, hopefully garage conversion and a few other bits and pieces we were having done. And we had no idea what the next eight or ten weeks would involve. But we smile, we say goodbye, and it definitely is going to take a couple of weeks. You'll be fine. Go on holiday. Come back. It'll be done.

[1 : 24] When we come back, I call him on move-in day and I say to him, we're back. Good to go. And he says, yeah, we're getting there. And I'm like, oh, you're getting there. Okay. So we're moving in there, right?

And he's like, yeah, if you want to. There's no fuse board at the moment. As in no electricity. And he's like, yeah, yeah, yeah, none. So no heating? No.

Hot water? No. It's good? No. Okay, we're not moving back in. Because you and I know that power is really important. We get used to it, certainly.

But actually, it does quite a lot of important jobs. For some people, it's life and death, whether they have machines that keep them going. For most of us, it's warmth and light and being able to turn our raw sausages into cooked sausages and all that kind of stuff.

We know that to not have power is a really big deal. I quite enjoy the camp out experience, if I'm honest. We quite, in our house, is it just us? We quite like a bit of a power cut for half an hour, an hour, two hours.

[2 : 25] Beyond that, we all start to get a bit twitchy and we're running out of candles, you know. But we know power really matters. And Paul, in Ephesians, is really keen that we know that there is power available to us through and in Jesus.

He wants us to know. And that did get me thinking about this. When we are powerless, it becomes quite a big deal. Not just in terms of a house, not just in terms of house power, but in terms of many different areas of life.

I'm sure you've found that too, that power is really the ability to do the thing we want to do and that we think is important. If you, I'm not looking in a particular direction, we don't particularly at the moment.

If you have parents who are aging, you might suddenly realize how powerless you are over them when you give them your advice and they completely ignore it. Anyone else experience that? Yeah, okay.

I'm seeing a few nodding heads. Okay. I imagine many of us have been in work situations with a bad boss or a dysfunctional team where you try and move something forward, like the smallest decision, and you find it's like, oh my goodness, it would be easier to push a boulder up a hill.

[3 : 38] You know, sometimes we find ourselves powerless. If you have kids, you can only think how many times you find yourself totally powerless where you think, would you just close your mouth when you're eating?

Is it just us? I know it's other people too. Would you tidy your room? Would you like go and have a bath? Like, I mean, I don't want to make our kids out to be awful or anything, but we find ourselves

saying the same things quite often.

And you think, oh, it's like, it's not happening. Sometimes we're powerless. Sometimes we're powerless and we really feel it. When we can't get a relationship to the place we want, or we can't find that person we dream of meeting, or when we just can't make something move that we know is really important, or we can't even care for someone we want to.

There are many moments in life where we find ourselves without power. And as I said before, Paul in Ephesians is really keen that we know what the power of Christ at work in us looks like, and that he is at work in us and through us.

So what I'm going to do is I'm going to pray the first bit, because chapter 1, verses 15 to about 18 are him praying for the early Ephesians church. So I'm going to pray that bit for us, and then sort of later Ephesians 1 into Ephesians 2 will come up on the screen, and we're going to read it together, and then we're going to dive in a little bit more.

[5 : 01] So why don't we pray? Let's pray. Father, we thank you. We thank you for this church family together. We thank you you've called us out. We thank you that you have called us to you.

And just like we see in Ephesians 1, we ask you, would you give us the spirit of wisdom and revelation that we might know you better? Would you open the eyes of our hearts that we would see you, and that we'd see the hope to which you've called us, the riches of all that you have ahead of us, and the incomparably great power at work in us who believe.

Lord, you raised Jesus from the dead. Wow, how powerful you are. You placed him above everything else. We're amazed at that.

Again, from verse 18, we say, open the eyes of our heart that we might see again just how amazing Jesus is, and your power at work in us is as we explore this text together. Amen.

So you heard there, Paul prays in Ephesians 1, the sort of latter part of it, that our eyes would be open, that we might get it, that we might get what he's done in saving us, that we might get what he's going to do in the future, and that we might get how great his power is.

[6 : 37] And then he says this in Ephesians 2, not 1, as it says there. As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of the world and the ruler of the kingdom of the air, who is at work in those who are disobedient.

All of us lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh, following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were deserving of wrath. But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ, even when we were dead in our transgressions.

It's by grace that you've been saved. God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming age he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.

For it's by grace you've been saved through faith. And this is not from yourselves. It's a gift of God, not by works, so that no one can boast.

For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do God's work, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

[8 : 04] I want us to have a look at this key verse, because there's a lot going on there. But here is, I think, the heart of what Paul is saying here, and what God's got for us today. I pray that eyes of your heart might be enlightened, that you would know his incomparably great power to us who believe.

Incomparable. Like, there is no comparison. It's massive, it's huge, and it is, to some degree, unimaginable, because it's so incomparable.

I was thinking about this. When you want to know if something is powerful, you probably want to see it at work, or to test it in some way.

So the cars many of us drove here today will have been through loads and loads and loads of tests, not just their emissions tests, but, like, are they powerful enough to do the job? Can they do what they're advertised to do?

Or if you have a crunch in them, are the airbags going to trigger correctly, and are they powerful enough to save you and to keep you safe? My kids have just realised there are essentially massive balloons in the front panel of the car, and they are completely obsessed with, where are they?

[9 : 08] Like, what do they do? My daughter was like, why do you always move out of seatbelt? I'm like, because it's really powerful. If this thing suddenly, like, if I crash the car, and this thing suddenly comes flying at you to save you, it could really hurt you.

This thing is really powerful. And cars are tested thousands of times. Ropes are tested loads and loads of times. I climb about once every two years, if I'm totally honest with you.

But I can trust the ropes that I use to kind of be lowered down on, because I know they're tested so many thousands of times, because people want to know, are they powerful enough?

Well, here's the test of the power of God. Incomparably great power to us who believe has been shown. It's made a dead man alive.

And it's not just made a dead man alive, it's taken Jesus who died from being dead to being above everything else. The power at work, and comparably great power available to you and me, it's been demonstrated at a particular time, in a particular place.

[10:12] This happened. Jesus died and rose again, and rose to the highest point in heaven, above all, everything else in the heavenly realms.

And there's a whole implication there that there are layers and realms in heaven that we're not going to get heads around today. But it's a huge amount of power to go. Okay, this is fun.

It's a huge amount of power. I'm going to try and move this thing and see if it improves it. Let's keep trying that, and I'll move to the other mic if I need to. It's a massive thing. And yet, here you go.

For us who believe. Because actually, what use is it in this massive power that has been demonstrated at the resurrection, if it doesn't mean something for us?

He goes on to then say in chapter 2 that we've just read, you and I, we were dead in our sins. We didn't know him. We were lost. We weren't going to spend eternity with him.

[11:12] But that incomparably great power is for us. It's absolutely amazing. And we too have seen it. If you've gone from not knowing Jesus to knowing Jesus, from not knowing eternity is secure for you to being secure, from not knowing the purpose and the joy that comes from knowing him, well, you've seen it.

You know it. You've experienced it yourself. Paul is telling us there's this massive power available, available to you and me, that we've seen already at work in our lives by saving us, but that it doesn't stop there.

Now, these weren't small, this wasn't a small set of works. It wasn't like, you know, I was thinking for my kids what would be a nice thing to happen. It would be, you know, going to McDonald's and the medium meal accidentally becomes large.

It wasn't like just a little step up. You were quite powerful or you were quite okay and then he just improved you a bit. Or Jesus was kind of okay and then just got a bit better. He was dead and he was raised up to above everything else.

You and me, verse 1, chapter 2, we were dead in our trespasses and sins. It wasn't a little flight upgrade. It wasn't a little meal upgrade. It was dead, dead, dead to being with him, loved by him.

[12:29] And as Mike mentioned to us last week, if you weren't here, Mike was helping us from early chapter 1 realise just how amazing it is to be chosen by him, to be adopted into his family and to be set free by him.

And what amazing truths already, by him all the way through, by grace you've been saved. Not your own work, but we're now chosen, adopted, redeemed. Because that immeasurably great power that raised Christ from the dead is also applied to us.

It lifts us out of sin into his goodness. By grace. By grace you've been saved. Not through your own works, but because of his chapter 2, verse 9.

The challenge I find with this, right, and I wonder if you're the same, is, okay, we're chosen, we're adopted, we're redeemed. We have all this great news. We also have this amazing news that there's this incomparable power for us.

So what does that really mean, though, is the question we're left with. Is that like, my hunch is we're probably in one of two places. Either that leaves us with a sense of, well, is that a cheat code?

[13:46] Does that mean if there's so much power at work in my life that can raise Jesus from the dead, does that mean everything's then sorted, or should it be? And we can end up feeling a bit almost like we must be doing something wrong if we know that Jesus is so powerful, and yet sometimes we find ourselves in really difficult situations, or struggling, or not able to move forward in life, or being in a situation we'd rather not be in.

There is another school of thought that, well, because Jesus' incomparably great power is at work, we have to just fake it. We can't possibly be vulnerable, because does that mean somehow he's not at work in our life? If my life is actually not okay, and yet Jesus' power is at work in me, do I then

have to kind of just pretend?

And you do get, I love that we're not this church, by the way. Can I just say loud and clear, this is not us, and I love that. That we're not going around being like, all in our suits, kind of pretending we're all sorted and fine.

Like, we did our welcome lunch earlier, and honestly, I loved hanging out with you guys, but you'll see it was a bit of a mess, because we were like, we just need some food on the table, can we get this sorted? I love that we're real with each other, I love that we're getting wrong quite often, I love that we're seeking God in it all, and he's moving us forward, and it's really good.

But there is a temptation there of either feeling kind of guilt, he's really powerful, so surely my life should be better, or he's really powerful, so I better just pretend it is. What I think we see in scripture is a much more real view of what it looks like to have the power of God at work in our lives.

[15:15] And I'm going to jump us into 2 Corinthians 4 for a little bit, because this verse is a beautiful verse that I think shows that for us. We have this treasure, God at work in us, God, the gospel, the good news, the spirit, we have this treasure in jars of clay, showing that the all-surpassing power is from God and not us.

There's incomparably great power for us who believe, but he chooses to do that in us. Jars of clay. I mean, I wonder, you probably know this already, but I wonder if you know what Paul is saying about you and me when he calls you a jar of clay.

A jar of clay is basically a terracotta pot, the kind of thing, anyone else got them in their garden? The kind of thing you use to put your plants in the garden. You're a gardening pot.

Okay, and what he's saying there is you're not going to last that long. You might have the power of God at work in you, but actually you're really temporary. He's also calling you weak, because if you ever dropped one of these, it's not usually being picked up a second time.

They're really weak. The kind of thing that are always available in the garden centre, because they're pretty ordinary and available and breakable. And the treasure within us, the spirit of God and the good news that he applies to us, is this, is precious, is strong, is of immeasurable worth and lasts, and lasts eternally.

[16:48] We have the power of God available to us, but we're weak holders of that power. It hasn't changed us into superheroes. It hasn't given us cheat codes to let us avoid death and suffering and pain.

We are in a very different position, because we're with Christ. We can approach those things very differently, because we have the spirit within us.

But we are always going to be, always going to be those jars of clay, beautiful made jars of clay, that he chooses by design to make us, quite short in time span.

By design, we're like that. So I want us to look at three things together, that I think are important for us to know when it comes to the immeasurably great power of God at work in us.

And I'm going to speed up a little bit, because we're only a little bit late. But here they are, that power in Christ is often power to endure. It's often power to keep going with the Holy Spirit in us, through whatever gets thrown at us.

[18:02] And Paul himself, further on in 2 Corinthians, says this, we're hard pressed on every side. Notice how many knots there are, but not crushed. He hasn't had the cheat code to escape hard pressure, but he has known the power of God with him to limit it.

We're perplexed, but not in despair. Persecuted, but not abandoned. Struck down, but not destroyed. Gosh, this verse is quite, we who are alive are being given over to death, says daily in the original text.

Why? So that his life may be revealed in us. He's really powerful. We're going to stay pretty weak. And not be free from the tough stuff. But he chooses his power to be on display in those moments. So for us to have power to endure looks like welcoming him in. Not to deny it's happening when we face the tough stuff. But to invite him in and just say, I need you.

I need you, Lord. And to keep putting one foot in front of the other, faithfully knowing him with you. And he also offers us, through that great power in us, power to have perspective.

[19:22] To see things not just from a now perspective, but from a much bigger perspective, beyond our clay pot temporary existence. And another verse on this, and I know I'm skipping books here a little bit, where we've got 2 Corinthians 4, 16 and 17.

We do not lose heart. We might outwardly be wasting away, yet inwardly we're being renewed daily. These light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that outweighs them all.

And the Holy Spirit helps you to remember the big picture. The big picture, despite the maybe small thing.

So what I wanted to do was show you a picture of a fly on a camera lens, but I ran out of time. Because when you get a little more, I find that I've got very focused, because I hit 44, and apparently it's a rite of passage, that suddenly everything just moves around in a slightly swimming kind of way.

But you get a mark on them, and suddenly I'm really aware, and I can't see a thing for a while. Because small things, when we lose perspective, can become very big things. And we kind of can't see the whole picture.

[20 : 31] But the Holy Spirit is the one in us, and the power of Christ in us helps us to see not just the big picture he's put us in, but the truly big picture, the eternal one.

The fact that, yeah, I might be wasting away, but actually the plan of God is eternal. One day it's going to be glorious. We might have momentary troubles, but what God's doing eternally is so much bigger than them.

I just encourage you to let the Holy Spirit do that in you. It's really, I know it's really hard when we lose perspective on stuff. It's really hard to take a step back and see what he might be doing. But the hope is, and the joy is, that we have this power in us that says, this is not it. Actually a year, 10 years, is small fry in the plans of God.

And the Holy Spirit is available to us to help us see the big picture of what God is doing. And that's true power. It's not glamorous power. It's not showy power.

[21 : 39] It's that hidden power in a clay pot, which is so good for us and so necessary, whatever we're facing. So I'd encourage you, when you are facing trials, when you don't know how things are going to be okay, when you're just seeking, well not just, but when you're seeking the will of God, allow him to give you that perspective.

Ask him for it. Say sorry when you've lost it. Fix your eyes on him. Keep looking to him. We fix our eyes on what is unseen, his eternal plan, rather than what is seen, these momentary afflictions.

The third one, and I don't know about you, but I find this one the most challenging, and I'm going to stand here and be really honest with you about that, is the power that we find in Christ allows us to see the miraculous at work.

And for that, I'm going to quickly turn us to Matthew 10, and I'm going to read you some of, I think, the hardest words, I certainly find them, some of the hardest words that Jesus shares.

Because when he's sending out the disciples to go, to go and fulfill his mission, he says this in Matthew 10, verse 7. In fact, I've probably got it up here for you. Yeah, there you go.

[22 : 59] He says, as you go, proclaim this message, the kingdom of heaven has come near.

Okay, I wonder if you find that hard enough, like telling your friends, by the way, the kingdom of God is near.

Like, the kingdom of who? Do you know? And then after that, which might be challenging enough, he says this, to those disciples and to us, heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, or who are ill, drive out demons, freely you receive, freely you give.

Now, I'm going to remind you, where does the power to do that stuff come from? Is it something we make? No. The same power that took Jesus from being dead to being king of heaven, as he rightfully was, is at work in you and me who believe.

And it's already taken us from being lost in our sin to being children of God. Those things still sound hard, but they're very different when you remember that power available.

That it's not you and me. We're not going to raise dead, guys. I'm going to be honest with you. We haven't yet, as scientists haven't yet worked out, really, I understand how to bring back life to someone who's been dead for more than a few minutes, right?

[24 : 22] You and me in our own power. I mean, in my own power, I can't even tell people the kingdom of God is near, let alone pray for someone to be healed. But in that same power that took Jesus from dead to life, that took you spiritually from dead to life, suddenly, that doesn't seem so much further away.

Because it's him, it's his power. There's something freeing about that. Freely receive, freely give. It's him that does it. It's him that brings the power to make it possible.

But I do want us to be challenged by those verses because he sends his disciples out to do that. He sends us out saying, pray for people. Expect to see the miraculous happen.

Not because you can do it, but because he's already shown it and demonstrated it in Jesus' death and resurrection. resurrection. When I was praying into this message, this is a picture that came to me as part of it.

I hope it's helpful for you, but does anyone know what this, give me a minute, I knew the Danes would know actually, that's the people I bet. Anyone else ever experienced this idea of a rip current?

[25 : 36] Just give me a nod, I won't ask you to explain it. Okay, a few of us. It's the idea, I'm terrified by this when we take our kids to the beach, that just because of the way the waves work, ask the Danes if you want more information about this, that basically, sometimes because the waves are coming in, they kind of end up with energy going out the way, and you kind of see a different wave formation that warns you that something's not right.

So I've been on to paddleboard, so this is particularly relevant to me last summer, and I'm like, is this going to be the time I'm dragged out? But what happens is, essentially, at a time when you think everything's fine, people can find themselves totally powerless.

They can be being dragged away from the nice, safe beach here, out into the middle of the ocean. The first thing people want to do when they find themselves powerless in this situation is, well, what do we reckon it is?

Swim back. There you go. Swim back to shore. Guess what they tell you not to do? Swim back to shore. It's the training, the sort of paddleboard videos you can watch on YouTube, and all the stuff about riptide says, actually, you will probably exhaust yourself trying to do it in your own strength, because this riptide current thing, going out from the beach, taking out into the ocean, is way stronger than you, and you just can't do it in your own strength.

And the advice, in fact, is take up to 90 seconds of doing nothing. Okay, you're hurtling out into the middle of the ocean, possibly on a beach with no lifeguards there, because they probably would have told you not to go in, probably would have cordoned off if they were there, and you're told to be still.

[27 : 10] You're told to stop fighting in your own strength and regain some strength. And then once you're taken out into the ocean, to take a different route. Do you know, I think for us, something, and I think something that is really alive in this text, is none of these things, perspective, endurance, the miraculous, they're not going to be achieved by seeing a challenge and just going, I can do this.

What do we need? We need a greater power. What's available? The same power that raised Jesus from the dead is available for you and me.

I'm still fully getting my head around that. But I love, I love that when I find myself powerless, when you find yourself powerless, we have a king who's chosen you, who's adopted you, who's saved you.

He wants to give you his power. It doesn't have to be manufactured ourselves so we can swim back to shore. He's already demonstrated it in Jesus. our job in that is to know we're a clay pot, to know that we can't do it all in our own strength and in fact to know that we are in Christ and we get to use his power.

We get to cry out to him and say, Father, I can't do it. Father, I haven't got the strength. Father, I don't know how this is going to end but I know you're with me.

[28 : 47] Would you be at work in my life? I hope that encourages you that this power is available to you. Adults, it can be a scary moment.

I can't do this. It can be a horrible moment because our whole adulthood is learning to say, actually, I've got it or at least I'm going to pretend I have. but I love that he isn't just saying, nah, you can't cope.

He's saying, the same power that raised Christ from the dead is available to you. We're going to listen to a song in a moment and really the song is the conclusion of this message and more importantly this message here in terms of Ephesians 1 and 2 because I think the answer here is surrender.

It's saying, I need you, Lord. I love that I'm chosen, adopted, redeemed, but I want, I need you and I surrender to you.

Would you let your great power be at work in my life?